REVISING GENRE, RE-VISIONING AGENCY: EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY WOMEN WRITERS WHO ROMANCED UTOPIA

by

Melanie Hinton

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The dissertation of **Melanie Hinton**

has been approved by the following supervisory committee members:

Scott Black	, Chair	**8/24/2012** Date Approved
Andrew Franta	, Member	**8/24/2012** Date Approved
Matthew Potolsky	, Member	**8/28/2012** Date Approved
Angela Smith	, Member	**8/24/2012** Date Approved
Nadja Durbach	, Member	**8/30/2012** Date Approved

and by **Barry Weller**, Chair of

the Department of **English**

and by Charles A. Wight, Dean of The Graduate School.

ABSTRACT

Critical feminist discussion of eighteenth-century British women writers and their solutions to the lack of agency inherent in female experience often highlight works such as Mary Astell's feminotopia, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694), that create female communities, thus emancipating women from British society and the patriarchal system so often seen as the root of all female powerlessness. Feminist scholars are interested in these female communities because of their striking liberalism in a century marked by conservative ideals of feminine behavior. This study, however, highlights the work of four women writers during the last half of the eighteenth century who develop their own solutions for greater female agency. These writers are, specifically, Elizabeth Montagu, Sarah Scott, Frances Burney, and Charlotte Lennox. Instead of a separatist model, and often in reaction to such a model, these women writers imagine a model for female empowerment that fully integrates woman within British society. These models, while mitigated in the degree of change they allow, are proto-feminist in their ability to believe society needed women, and to imagine a greater scope for woman's capacity than other women. These writers build their models, I argue, using romance as a strategy to resist and critique societal norms, while also educating readers in the logic of their solutions. Their use of romance interacts with other genres, allowing each writer to model the integration she is encouraging. The generic hybridity also allows their utopian solutions to escape comparison with contemporary male utopian creations, and the interaction between romance and other genres makes romance a symbol for the kind of dreaming each writer's utopian solution will allow.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The story of this study begins with the Bluestockings organized around the eighteenth-century salons of Elizabeth Montagu and Elizabeth Vesey, but more importantly around the social values of intellectual pursuit, protestant philanthropy and female friendship. Critics have suggested the Bluestockings and Hitcham House, the failed scheme of a female separatist community that followed, were an attempt to literalize proto-feminist utopian dreams of a female-centered society, such as that expounded in Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies*.[1] As such, many literary historians identify Sarah Scott's companion novel, *Millenium Hall*, as a feminotopia that "emancipates women from patriarchal oppression and sexual exploitation."[2] This study, however, focuses on a set of skeptical female responses to such a dream. I argue that beginning with Sarah Scott in *Millenium Hall*, a handful of women responded to the dream of female community and other feminocentric utopian wishes skeptically, using romance as a strategy for eliciting such a mitigated response. Instead of a separatist, female community, they imagined a fully integrated nation where not only does Britain assist women in finding greater agency, but women assist Britain in reaching a refined

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[1] Ruth Perry, *The Celebrated Mary Astell: An Early English Feminist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 34. Here she calls Scott's *Millenium Hall* "the imaginative fulfillment of Mary Astell's first book." Alessa Johns, "Mary Astell's 'Excited Needles': Theorizing Feminist Utopia in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Female Communities 1600-1800: Literary Visions and Cultural Realities*, eds. Rebecca D'Monte and Nicole Pohl (Hampshire: Macmillan, in association with the Institute of English Studies. School of Advanced Study, University of London, 2000), 129 and Christine Rees, *Utopian Imagination and Eighteenth-Century Fiction* (London: Longman, 1996), chapter 7 ("Women's Utopias") also draw connections between the two literary projects.

[2] Nicole Pohl, "Utopianism after More: the Renaissance and Enlightenment," *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature,* ed., Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 69.

moral purpose and unity. Their uses of romance, as I will show, first assist Elizabeth Montagu and her associates in establishing a new female identity consistent with such a community, but situated within a national context. Romance then allows Sarah Scott to critique utopia, replacing it with the romance heroine as a more suitable figure for social change. Finally, romance allows Frances Burney and Charlotte Lennox to both long for female community while simultaneously dismantling its potential, and proposing in its place new, scaled-down models for woman's position within Britain.

As Patricia Parrinder reminds us, romance is the yearning after the unattainable; utopia *is* the unattainable.[3] As such, romance better reflects the position of these eighteenth-century female writers who long for a female arcadia but see its realization as jeopardizing women's concerns that can only be safeguarded by preserving woman's role within British society. I argue that their choice of romance is indicative of the nature of their alternative solutions to the social order: compromises with the existent world, crafted out of the material available to women in the eighteenth century. These women's texts are not brave new worlds that provide empty places in which Britain could look at itself.[4] Instead, these women's textual frameworks are anticipatory illuminations built out of romance's cultural associations.[5] They use romance as a self-conscious strategy to solicit new identities for women and pair those with reflections on identity, and rather

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[3] Patricia Parrinder, "Romance and Utopia," in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature,* ed., Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 154.

[4] This is Paul Ricoeur's description of utopia from *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).

[5] "Anticipatory illumination" is Ernst Bloch's term. This refers to a work of art that pushes the world into its "entelechical borders" without causing its demise. It anticipates something that has not yet existed, thus making it possible: "As art, it reproduces, if necessary, the distance from the law that is immanently just as it dares to create a paradise out of other objects that are immanently driven to an end and made into something, made positive and possible as anticipatory illuminations." Bloch, "Art and Society," in *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 77.

than author romances, these writers represent their compromised solutions for female agency with staged interactions between romance and other genres. As a result of their use of romance, these social imaginings escape comparison with the radical conventions of utopia, and the male practitioners of that genre—comparisons which, as scholarly discussion of female utopias has shown, could only reflect poorly on the female imagination. These women's revisions of the social order prove their solutions to be serious, practical and designed for immediate application. Further, their use of generic material for social reform can help construct a more nuanced conceptualization of eighteenth-century proto-feminism in modern critical discussions.

That women experienced less than ideal conditions in the eighteenth century is a given in enlightenment studies. They were considered the property of their husbands, could not vote or own property, and had little access to professions. However, throughout the century, they also experienced unprecedented freedoms. Marriages became more companionate, for instance, and the flood of female writers in the press is indicative of women's increasing access to education and growing presence in public discourse.[6] The particular nature and degree of these restrictions and freedoms are outside the focus of this study. However, I would argue both their restrictions and their freedoms produced the texts discussed here. Certainly they had reason to complain. The existence of utopia argues that everyone has reason to complain, though surely, women had more reason to protest than their male counterparts. However, the expressions of the female writers studied here are a product of each author's belief in the value of her own voice.

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[6] Elizabeth Eger provides a useful discussion of the temperament of female issues in eighteenth-century Britain in the introduction to her article "Paper Trails and Eloquent Objects: Bluestocking Friendship and Material Culture," *Parergon* 26, no. 2 (2009): 111-12.

With that in mind, I will focus here on other trends in the eighteenth century, namely, attitudes towards and use of romance and utopia. As Clive Probyn argues, "the eighteenth century is the time during which foundational questions are posed about the genre, value, and meaning of romance."[7] Given the fruitfulness of the time period for this generic form, I will begin by reviewing the progress of romance through the eighteenth century, concluding with the essential characteristics of the form and its usefulness for female writers. I will then discuss utopia, which was also at a seminal crossroads in the eighteenth century because of revolution and shifting political structures in Britain and throughout Europe. Finally, I will provide summaries of each of the chapters included in this study and end with some reflections on the particular nature of these writers' feminism.

Romance

Romance notoriously suffered from a low reputation in the eighteenth century. Of all the reasons to dislike romance, probably the most central to eighteenth-century Britain was its dubious moral character. Fiction in general fell under the hand of moralists. Morality is Samuel Johnson's primary concern in his discussion of fiction in *Rambler* No. 4. Johnson describes fiction as having been transformed from romance into writings that "exhibit life in its true state, diversified only by accidents that daily happened in the world."[8] In fact, romance, he argues, is less dangerous to readers because it is "so remote from all that passes among men, that the reader was in very little danger of making any

[7] Clive Probyn, "Paradise and Cotton-mill: Rereading Eighteenth-century Romance," in *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*, ed. Corinne Saunders (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 254.
[8] Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler*, no. 4, in *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook 1700-1820*, eds. E.J. Clery and Robert Miles (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2000), 176.

applications to himself."[9] His anxiety about fiction, however, is indicative of a general eighteenth-century concern about the imprinting, shaping power of reading material. He writes:

> These books are written chiefly to the young, the ignorant, and the idle, to whom they serve as lectures of conduct, and introductions into life. They are the entertainment of minds unfurnished with ideas, and therefore easily susceptible of impressions; not fixed by principles, and therefore easily following the current of fancy; not informed by experience, and consequently open to every false suggestion and partial account."[10]

Johnson casts fiction as a stand-in for real-world experience. Its audience is a collection of blank slates sans ideas, principles, and experience, and the likeness to daily life he imputes to such novels makes them look like real-world experience. Hence, the danger of fiction is its capacity to trick its readers. These readers, "the young, the ignorant, and the idle," presumably include everyone but reasonable, well-adjusted, and educated adult men for whom interaction in the world serves as a corrective, perhaps even disallows them the experience of fiction—either because of their lack of leisure time for reading or because their real-world experience prevents them from believing in someone's imaginative version of life.[11]

Johnson gives more credit to readers of fiction than many other eighteenth-century writers and critics who believed such people could be taken in by romance as well—fictions that "employ giants to snatch away a lady from the nuptial rites, . . . knights to bring her back from captivity; . . . bewilder its personages in desarts," and "lodge them in imaginary castles."[12] Cervantes' *Don Quixote* and its most successful eighteenth-century imitation, *The Female Quixote*, both argue for the power of such

[9] S. Johnson, *The Rambler*, no. 4, 177.
[10] Ibid., 176-77.
[11] Ibid., 176.
[12] Ibid., 176.

imaginative fiction to seduce and trick its readers as well. Such is the claim of Eaton Stannard Barrett's heroine, who, by 1813, is parodying a familiar move in eighteenth-century public discourse. She writes in a letter,

> Romances . . . indulged in extreme, . . . tend to incapacitate us from encountering the turmoils of active life. They present us with incidents and characters which we can never meet in the world; and act upon the mind like inebriating stimulants; first elevate, and at last enervate it. They teach us to revel in ideal scenes of transport and distraction; and harden our hearts against living misery, by making us so refined as to feel disgust at its unpoetical accompaniments.[13]

Perhaps the idea that a reader could be deluded by romance, regardless of how unformed he or she is, is part of the "false suggestion and partial account" in the post-Richardsonian fiction about which Johnson warns his audience. In fact, it is worth noting that in the above account, romance is a choice: a drug the reader chooses to take. It is only after the drug is administered that behavior modification occurs. And even that is not delusion. According to Barrett's heroine, romances "accustom" the mind; they "incapacitate" the reader and "teach" the reader, but they do not trick him or her. Johnson's readers, on the other hand, are victims set up for failure by books designed for a moral purpose—"lectures of conduct"—but laced with falseness and partiality. This illustrates the primary difference Johnson draws between romance "of the last age," and his modern fiction. Realistic novels are exemplary and instructive, if done right; romances provide amusement. One is necessary—even more powerful than moral instruction, says Johnson—the other is unimportant.

Johnson's distinction between novels and romance participates in what Arthur Johnston called "the gradual descent of the romances to the literature of the nursery," a

[13] Eaton Stannard Barrett, *The Heroine, or Adventures of Cherubina*, eds., Avril Horner and Sue Zlosnik (Kansas City, MO: Valancourt Books, 2011), 287.

move that David Fairer argues serves "history's official 'progress of refinement' narrative."[14] Johnson, by his own admission, read romances—but as a youth. Like Paul, as an adult he put away childish things. So, he argues, did the eighteenth century. Subsequent critics have followed Johnson's lead, accepting a narrative that casts romance as a dark realm from which the novel emerged. In some ways, this narrative of the rise of the novel is itself romance, a story invested in maintaining the archetypal binaries Northrop Frye discovers in romance: death and rebirth, good and evil, us and other.[15] The story arc of the rise of the novel is a mythic structure Frye might reassimilate as scriptural in origin: enlightened country quests for self-realization and is rewarded with a successful literary product. Or, the story might go, early literary progenitor sacrifices self, but out of his ashes is born new life. Either way, the story employs a structure that maintains a separation between new, reasonable fiction and the embarrassment of imaginative tales by overly dramatizing the difference between the two forms. Fredric Jameson would call this rendering, as he does romance, an imaginary "solution" to a real social contradiction.[16] And that social contradiction is, explicitly, the prevailing influence of improbable, imaginative stories in an age that has learned to value scientific exploration, sense, and reason. The rise of the novel places romance and the novel back to back in a chronology so they do not mix. However, this is a symbolic solution that points back to a real and unresolvable tension: that both reason and fancy coexisted in the eighteenth-century Age of Reason.

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[14] Arthur Johnston quoted in David Fairer, "The Faerie Queene and Eighteenth-century Spenserianism," in *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary,* ed. Corinne Saunders (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 199.
[15] Northrop Frye, "The Mythos of Summer: Romance," *Anatomy of Criticism,* in *Fantastic Literature: A Critical Reader,* ed. David Sandner (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 2004), 108-15.
[16] Fredric Jameson, "Magical Narratives: On the Dialectical Use of Genre Criticism," in *Fantastic Literature: A Critical Reader,* ed. David Sandner (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 2004), 193.

Most eighteenth-century commentators accounted for romance as the opposite of reality and reason, their antithesis. "The Romance in lofty and elevated language, describes what never happened nor is likely to happen," wrote Clara Reeve in *The Progress of Romance*.[17] Or, as Barrett's main character says, "Romances, . . . address the imagination alone."[18] While novels are imaginative, they also employ reason in their ability to match everyday manners. Romance is made of only one texture. That texture has no pattern or precedent in real life, and therefore is at odds with it.

However, perhaps what gained romance its low reputation in the Age of Enlightenment was its opposition to reason not as imagination, but as emotion, sentiment, feeling. Certainly, imagination and desire are related values if both can oppose reason. The link is made clear in an 1802 account of romance. There, the writer casts imagination and sentiment as cohabitants. He talks of the "readers' enraptured *fancy*," which is "ever found to dwell with *inexpressible delight*; but which, at last, irresistibly impel the tender and too susceptible heart, to yield to the delusive *sensations of bliss*, with which the bosom is filled."[19] Because fancy and sentiment live together, fostering fancy is also fostering emotion. Furthermore, his critique of fostering desire over reason can be heard in his words: "too susceptible," "irresistibly impel," and "delusive sensations." His comment suggests it is the sensation of bliss experienced by readers of romance that deludes, rather than the imaginative text itself.

Other eighteenth-century objections to the sentimental can be found in many accounts of romance, beginning with attempts to define it. Often, in the eighteenth

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[17] Clara Reeve, *The Progress of Romance*, in *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook 1700-1820,* eds. E.J. Clery and Robert Miles (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 2000), 180.
[18] Barrett, *The Heroine, or Adventures of Cherubina*, 287.
[19] W.W., "On Novels and Romances," in *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook 1700-1820,* eds. E.J. Clery and Robert Miles (Manchester, England: Manchester University Press, 2000), 212. Italics added.

century, romance was defined by what it was not. Reeve's definition is a good example of this. What is romance? It is not real. It is not probable. Perhaps this definition by negation is a register of that embarrassing social contradiction: the underlying desire that inscribes something other than reality. Without the admission of romance's origin or conclusion in desire, attempts to define the form occasionally generated syntactic lists of its features. William Congreve began such a list. "[T]he Constant Loves and invincible Courages of Hero's, Heroins, Kings and Queens, Mortals of the first Rank, and so forth," he begins, and includes "lofty Language, miraculous Contingencies and impossible performances."[20] But Congreve's definition is particularly enlightening when his static list of conventions gets hijacked by an account of a reader's response to them. These

> miraculous Contingencies and impossible performances, elevate and surprise the Reader into a giddy Delight which leaves him flat upon the Ground whenever he gives of, and vexes him to think how he has suffer'd himself to be pleased and transported, concern'd and afflicted at the several Passages which he has Read, viz. these Knights Success to their Damosels Misfortunes, and such like, when he is forced to be very well convinced that 'tis all a lye."[21]

Suddenly, in the midst of a catalogue we are presented with a narrative, and it is a narrative of desire: the kind of desire produced by reading romance. The reading produces desire *for* romance. But notably, the reading generates, along with its "giddy Delight," vexation at how easily he has been taken in by it. This suggests that the text also makes visible his desire to be rational, while forcing him to recognize his failure to be so. His response is an intuitive reaction to that social contradiction with which Jameson characterizes romance. This insertion of the reader's experience into a definition of romance is appropriate. As Nigel Smith argues, romance was and is best defined not

[20] William Congreve, Introduction to *The Incognita*, quoted in Barbara Fuchs, *Romance: The New Critical Idiom* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1.
[21] Congreve, Introduction, 1.

by its form, but by "its responsiveness to readers' needs and desires."[22] When Barrett's protagonist, then, documents the effects of extreme indulgence in romance, her drug analogy is particularly apropos, suggesting not only that readers take it by choice, but that they take it because they like it. It ministers to them by addressing an ailment. Her description of its effects on the mind reinforces romance's use as an antidote. She says, "[romances] teach [the reader] to revel in ideal scenes of transport and distraction; and harden our hearts against living misery."[23] Like Congreve's reader, this romance addict learns to look at idealism. This idealism tutors her desire, providing something other than "the vulgarities of living misery" to feed on. In fact, the complaint about idealism—about travel and distraction here, but in other places referring to perfect characters—is a general eighteenth-century complaint about romance that registers an awareness of the desire that pictures of perfection can arouse. This was in spite of traditional arguments, like Johnson's, that claimed perfect models were beneficial for readers. For many in the eighteenth century, desire was dangerous.

However, criticism about the desire inspired by romance quickly led to associations with women. In another account of romance—this one gendered—the critique of sense-based texts continues. The writer of this essay cites an "author of a medical treatise lately published," who says that "[w]hile attending to the influence which the affections and passions of the mind are found to have on our system, he does not hesitate to say, that among the mournful passions, must be included, an extravagant degree of love, and into which he says, young females particularly, are precipitated,

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[22] Cited in Lori Humphrey Newcomb, "Gendering Prose Romance in Renaissance England," in *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary,* ed. Corinne Saunders (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 122.
[23] Barrett, *The Heroine, or Adventures of Cherubina,* 287.

merely, by reading improper novels."[24] He adds that according to the medical professional, the "unhappy victims of insanity" fall into three classes: "the first consist of men deprived of their understandings by pride; the second of girls by love; and the third of women by jealousy."[25] Certainly the writer is taunting readers with the threat of mental illness if they read too much. The link he provides between novels and mental illness is emotion, specifically love, which he indicates is found in abundance in romantic narratives. His comment suggests that romances simply highlight what is already latent within young girls. In fact, his account of the insane rests, almost certainly, on assumptions about what men most desire (pride or power), what girls desire (love), and what women desire (loyalty—an offshoot of love). Like Johnson, he suggests these fictions target the "idle and uninitiated."[26] Like Johnson, he suggests men are less susceptible to fiction because of "the many opportunities which men have, of entering into the bustle of life."[27] However, unlike Johnson, he suggests that romances are more popular with women because "the female mind is more readily affected by the *tendency* of such works."[28] By the "tendency of such works," he is referring not just to emotion in general, "[women's] quickness and delicacy of sensation" but also, as his account of the insane suggests, their drive for love.[29] Romance succeeds because it targets what young women already most desire: love.

The eighteenth century was not the first generation to link women with romance. As early as the Renaissance, writers such as Juan Luis Vives in *The Education of a*

[24] W.W., "On Novels and Romances," 212.
[25] Ibid., 212.
[26] Ibid., 211.
[27] Ibid., 211.
[28] Ibid., 212.
[29] Ibid., 212.

Christian Woman and reformers such as St. Teresa of Avila were warning women about romances, suggesting they were particularly susceptible to the influences of fancy or imagination.[30] However, while this rhetorical link often manifested itself in warnings and derogations of the female mind, Lori Humphrey Newcomb argues the gendering of romance was not necessarily a negative development. She identifies several Renaissance literary trends that assisted in the feminization of romance's readership. One of those is the increasing habit of addressing women in introductions to and asides within romances. Later, appeals to women began appearing in titles and dedications, such as Philip Sidney's *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia*. These, she suggests, were part of a marketing ploy that, while still targeting a core male readership, invited women to the textual world and implied that women could choose what they read.[31] In other words, she reinscribes the feminization of romance as a positive development that produced an increasing degree of agency for renaissance women.

Newcomb also suggests that the link between women and romance was encouraged by the form itself. She suggests that once romance was inscribed as female, the genre allowed men what they believed was an indulgence in women's secret fantasies. As books that were supposedly passed between ladies in the privacy of female territory, romances offered men, both authors and readers, "illicit entry into women's fantasy lives."[32] This is an interesting reading of romance that suggests it was useful for men's desires for power, perhaps, (dominating every sphere of experience including the female dressing room) as well as for women's desires for love. This is at least part of the message of Sir George's character in *The Female Quixote*. Unlike the model hero, Mr.

[30] These responses are discussed in Fuchs, *Romance*, 80-81.
[31] Newcomb, "Gendering Prose Romance," 121-37.
[32] Ibid., 124.

Glanville, Sir George uses romance to decode Arabella's fantasies and inhabits it in order to gain the upper hand over her and her more appropriate and marriage-minded suitor. However, if romance generates male fantasy about women, it does so shaped by romance politics. As Clive Probyn notes, the genre reproduces the position of woman in patriarchy—the Burkean vision of Marie Antoinette, for instance, lighting the globe with her feminine beauty, but requiring the intercession of chivalric defenders to protect her from revolutionary Jacobites.[33] This female position was, for Burke, at least part of the draw of romance, and key to his concept of self-identity. In other words, it is important to add that romance also reproduces the position of man in patriarchy. These positions are simply positions that have the potential for misreading. The 1802 commentator on romance and women, for instance, employed grandiose, generalized claims about gender and their respective desires. Like him, Sir George sees romance as a vehicle for seduction, therefore about and for women. Likewise, public rhetoric from the renaissance on assumed women read romance to indulge their sexual fantasies. This is at least part of the set of assumptions that leads Sir George to employ romance as his mode of operation. However, both his successes and failures are marked by a cultural reading of gender that leads to a misreading of Arabella. Arabella is not entirely fooled by Sir George's behavior. It is her familiarity with romance that allows her to anticipate his designs somewhat. Romance is full of the threat of sexual exploitation as well as pure, perfect heroines who withstand such attempts on their virtue. This suggests Arabella's gain from romance is not about sexual license, but about thwarting male sexual license. Where Sir George succeeds, however, Arabella misses his intentions because of different aims. She adopts romance, not just because of the perfect examples of human behavior and

[33] Probyn, "Paradise and Cotton-mill," 252.

historical accounts it provides, as she tells the doctor, but also, as much critical discussion today suggests, to imagine "a world in which female intelligence is licensed to operate as the agent of its own self-definition."[34] By adopting the traditional male position of desire, Sir George ultimately misreads the object of his desire.

Certainly romances *were* read as a form of indulgent sexual fantasy, and not just by men. They often contained material that lent itself to such use. As such, they quickly gained a reputation for being licentious. Newcomb's argument suggests romance's licentiousness brought people together. The implication of her argument, for instance, is that romance provided a link between genders through their fantasies. While this link was productive of miscommunication, considering the broad popularity of the form, it was probably, more often, communication. Perhaps this was the most dangerous part of the desire generated by romance in the eighteenth century. Romance lays bare each gender's desires. Ian Watt, for instance, suggests Richardson's contributions to the realistic novel center around his choice of topic: courtship. Courtship, Watt claims, brings together the two most important forces in eighteenth-century society: love and money. Richardson's novels both reflect the changing structure of marital alliances from the patriarchal family to the conjugal, and argue for marriage in place of sexual alliances because of the connection between marriage and economic gain. In such a marriage market, women, Watt says, became guardians of their own chastity by disavowing interest in sex until the marriage arrangement was in place.[35] If this really was the case, romance would certainly have undone such a cultural position. Romance makes visible woman's sexual desire, proving it to be just as real as man's. As the harbinger of such gendered revelations at

[34] Ibid., 254.
[35] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965), 135-73.

odds with the social order, it is easy to see how romance took up its place as the diseased genre that made way for the healthy novel.

However, it is also important to note that while romance was read to indulge sexual fantasy, it was often read to elicit other, very different desires. Newcomb, again, suggests women could have read romances subversively, or simply as an act of resistance against the public outcry against the literary form.[36] Anna Howe, an eighteenth-century contemporary discussed by Fiona Price, suggests that romance gives women a desire for an inordinate amount of power. She points to women's desire for the hero with the most kills and adventures over the average male as a manifestation of their consummate taste for status or power.[37] However, this desire for power can manifest itself in other ways as well. For instance, romances often feature heroines whose beauty and charm are so great, they spawn numerous conquests. Not only, then, can female readers mark status by counting how many adventures their man has had, as Howe suggests, but also how many conquests the heroine they identify with has made. Excess, in romance, serves status. In fact, this form of power-mongering was literalized in the mid-eighteenth century in the form of the coquette. The coquette, a recognizable caricature in British, urban, polite society, was a figure who measured her power by how many men she conquered. While the coquette was often lampooned in eighteenth-century British society as thoughtless and empty-headed, Teresa Braunschneider recuperates the coquette as someone who was cannily aware of her status as object in society and used her feminine wiles to take back

[36] Newcomb, "Gendering Prose Romance," 129.
[37] Fiona Price, "'Inconsistent Rhapsodies': Samuel Richardson and the Politics of Romance," in *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*, ed., Corinne Saunders (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 278.

the position of subject.[38] Braunschneider's reading suggests that, for coquettes, applied romance was a vehicle for resistance and a means to elicit greater power.

However, women were not the only ones to read romance as a form of protest. Men were well aware of romance's subversive capabilities. As Newcomb notes, "[f]or all their dismissal of romance to women, men led the way in articulating the unique value of its capaciousness and indirection."[39] Male writers employed romance to address such topics as war, "politics, nation, gender and representation."[40] Fiona Price notes romance's eighteenth-century redeployment as a means of solidifying British national character against the French. She also notes eighteenth-century romance's utility in political arguments—Burke's being an obvious example. However, she also argues that these uses contributed to romance's low status. In the process of being deployed under political and national causes—and perhaps because of the kinds of pleasurable power it lends its readers—the form became associated with Jacobitism, the French, self-interest, and the arbitrary use of power.[41] The coquettish brand of power allied with romance, for instance, has been described by Jennie Batchelor as Hobbesian, a power structure Britain would have seen as French or foreign, at least, by the mid-eighteenth century.[42] In fact, Price goes on to argue that the public, rhetorical anxiety about women and romance was really anxiety about the public sphere. If women, already too susceptible to sentiment, indulge in sentimental romance, they will be lured from reason and therefore corrupted.

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[38] For a full discussion of the coquette, see Theresa Braunschneider, *Our Coquettes: Capacious Desire in the Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2009).
[39] Newcomb, "Gendering Prose Romance," 131.
[40] Ibid., 131.
[41] Price, "'Inconsistent Rhapsodies,'" 283.
[42] Jennie Batchelor, "The 'latent seeds of coquetry': Amatory Fiction and the 1750s Novel," *Masters of the Marketplace: British Women Novelists of the 1750s,* ed. Susan Carlile (Lanham, Maryland: Lehigh University Press, 2011), 145-164.

Furthermore, this corruption would affect society. Romance, in this sense, was both useful and dangerous as "a licensed vehicle for otherwise transgressive ideas."[43]

Perhaps most notably, however, romance was and is deployed as an antidote to reality. This is not simply escapism. It is, as Probyn says, a "willfully perverse way of rewriting in art a life that in empirical terms has always already let us down."[44] While this suggests an element of optimism to romance, the form is also a "response to foreknowledge of mortality, pain, and loss."[45] As such, romance is perhaps more knowledgeable about reality than realism. Romance is a genre that knows. As Probyn says, it is an art form that is always aware of what it denies.[46] It is not pure optimism, then. It does not expect its fantasy world to be realized; it does not manifest hope for the future. Instead, romance manifests its generic blend of optimism and sadness as nostalgia—the longing for a time gone by, a golden age. Perhaps this would be a longing for childhood, the phallic stage, when such flights of fancy seemed possible.

Critical discussion has recently been recuperating romance as realistic and valuable. The eighteenth century began to as well. Attempts to identify the inception of an eighteenth-century trend to reclaim a lost imaginative birthright usually start with Joseph Addison's 1712 essay, "The Fairy Way of Writing." There, he recasts "nature" as "natural Prejudices," and argues that elements of romance can be used in poetry to access our "childlike 'Notions.'"[47] Significantly, he is not suggesting poets write romances, but that they use its characteristics as a kind of play or flirtation with other, more reasonable

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[43] Probyn, "Paradise and Cotton-mill," 252.
[44] Ibid., 253.
[45] Ibid., 255.
[46] Ibid., 252.
[47] Joseph Addison, "The Fairy Way of Writing," in *Fantastic Literature: A Critical Reader,* ed., David Sandner (London and New York: Praeger, 2004), 21.

genres. The result would be an interaction between readers' primal natures and their reason, an interplay Addison thought productive. Besides suggesting a new literary endeavor, Addison's essay was important because, as the most influential literary critic of his day, he was recognizing that something other than reason was necessary. Perhaps this was a realization similar to Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's, who complain that the Enlightenment dispelled myth and therefore disenchanted the world. Their analysis of modernity suggests that technology, the scientific method and numbers—all replacements for myth—have led us down a violent and barbaric path.[48] Ultimately, Addison's fundamental assumption, the necessity for something other than just reason, would culminate in Romanticism at the turn of the century, and its celebration of the imagination and emotion as a way of understanding the world.

Before Romanticism, however, there were other eighteenth-century champions of romance and its progeny. Some of these took an historical approach to the form. At one time, the historical line of reasoning went, chivalry did exist, and people believed in magic. Reading romance, then, is a way of understanding the culture of past times. Johnson, for instance, used this logic to justify Shakespeare's use of the supernatural.[49] Others, most notably Richard Hurd, approached romance through allegory. Hurd argued that the giants of romance were really the feudal lords who presented the threat of violence and oppression to the common man.[50] Not only did Hurd's argument allow hypothetical readers to approach romance through history of past times, it also made

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[48] Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "The Concept of Enlightenment," *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments,* ed., Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans., Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002).
[49] Charlotte Lennox, *Shakespear Illustrated: or the Novels and Histories, on which the Plays of Shakespear are Founded, Collected and Translated from the Original Authors* (London: A. Millar, 1753).
[50] Richard Hurd, *Letters on Chivalry and Romance*, in *Fantastic Literature: A Critical Reader,* ed., David Sandner (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 2004), 24-29.

romance politically relevant in the eighteenth century, where remnants of feudalism were still visible. Yet another approach attempted to recuperate the supernatural as the product of reason. Elizabeth Montagu did this in her defense of Shakespeare when she praised his deployment of praeternatural beings. He used them strategically, she argued, matching them to the local superstitions of his audience.[51] This addresses Johnson's claim that realistic novels are harder to write than romances because they have to match everyday manners.[52] Use of the supernatural, Montagu suggests, follows the same laws and requirements as realism. Later, Walter Scott would extend her argument, laying down additional laws that must accompany use of the supernatural. Its uses must be "rare, brief, indistinct," he says.[53] Again, the fundamental assumption here is that fanciful literature is also governed by logic.

Looking over the progress of romance in the eighteenth century, it is possible to draw out several general conclusions about the form. First of all, this "notoriously slippery" genre can be defined by its interaction with readers' needs and desires.[54] While romance taps into readers' desires for love and sex, it also may contain and generate desires for—among other things—power, a better social sphere, a unified national consensus. It addresses these topics best because of its awareness, as I said earlier, of what it suppresses. This is a product of what critics identify as its other predominant characteristic: its self-consciousness. It is a capacious genre that can present convention and reflect on it subversively. Romance, therefore, both the written products and the

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[51] Elizabeth Montagu, *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare: Compared with the Greek and French Dramatic Poets; with Some Remarks upon the Misrepresentations of Mons. De Voltaire,* 6th ed. (London: Harding and Wright, 1810).
[52] Johnson, *The Rambler*, no. 4, 176.
[53] Walter Scott, "On the Supernatural in Fictitious Composition," in *Fantastic Literature: A Critical Reader,* ed. David Sandner (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 2004), 55.
[54] Fuchs, *Romance,* 1.

experience of it, is characterized by duality or tension. Congreve's reader provides a good example of this. He experiences multiple reactions to romance. He is enchanted by the adventures of romance, disappointed at his own credulity, and depressed by the necessary reflection that romance is a lie. As the reader's experience indicates, romance simultaneously supplies convention and transgression, intimacy and distance, idealism and mimetic value. Jameson suggests this duality in romance is really a social contradiction to which romance proffers a symbolic solution. The value of the narrative is not in the solution, per se, but in the review and detangling of the paradox of difference. In other words, romance is located in the recognition of unresolvable differences, not in the solution to them. While this tense duality produced by its self-consciousness makes romance, hopefully, "an experiment with ideas whose time has yet to come," or "the 'golden' world of the reader's desire," it also contains in it "an allusion to our leaden origins and destinations."[55] Therefore, romance is a nostalgic blend of sadness and spirit.

Romance can also be considered a kind of story—the kind that provides a response to readers' psychic needs. This makes romance a large story, an archetype or mythos, as Frye brands it.[56] Frye's approach to romance is somewhat formulaic. For instance, using his approach to romance, it would be possible to reassess Mathew Lewis's *The Monk* simply as a retelling of the Faustian myth, while modern criticism suggests the book contains much more complexity. However, Frye's comments do suggest romance's strong alliance with plot and story. This is an aspect of romance that eighteenth-century readers and writers inherently recognized as well. Horace Walpole, for instance, in his introduction to *The Castle of Otranto*, claims his book is a regeneration of romance that

[55] Probyn, "Paradise and Cotton-mill," 252, 264.
[56] Northrop Frye. *The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 186-206.

blends ancient romance with the modern. What ancient romance brings to the table for such an experiment is "imagination and improbability": both terms associated with plot.[57] What ancient romance lacks that necessitates such a combination, he says, is that "The actions, sentiments, conversations, of the heroes and heroines of ancient days were as unnatural as the machines employed to put them in motion."[58] Like Addison, Walpole wants to blend the imagination with the real. He does so by adding characters. He is one of many in the eighteenth century who valued romance for its plot, and what Johnson calls the novel, for its character. Likewise, Corinne Saunders suggests that romance is "a genre waiting to happen, a story already told."[59] Her words suggest romance is simply a kind of story waiting for a classification. As such, she and others retrace romance through the literature of the classical world where a term for the genre did not exist. Romance can be found everywhere because it is not a conscious literary category, but a kind of narrative people are inclined to tell. Romance can even be found in literary criticism. Romance as universal story justifies Kathryn King's commentary on what she calls "feminocentric invented traditions": "the evidence of these two works . . . begin to seem less history than romance in their disregard for the fact, evidence, and argumentation needed to make their claims convincing."[60] King's comments remind us that even literary critics are fueled by desires that can produce the kind of invention represented by romance.

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[57] Horace Walpole, Preface to the Second Edition of *The Castle of Otranto* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 9.
[58] Ibid., 9.
[59] Corinne Saunders, Introduction to *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*, ed. Corinne Saunders (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 2.
[60] Kathryn R. King, "Female Agency and Feminocentric Romance," *The Eighteenth Century* 41, no. 1 (2000): 56-65.

The rise of the novel narrative, a twentieth-century critical narrative, is likewise a story produced by a nation's psychic need to characterize itself as progressive. More recent criticism suggests that the story is idealized. While the novel certainly rose, it hardly did so out of the ashes of its romantic heritage. Jameson's discussion of the novel is useful here. He defines the form as a "combinatoire" of "heterogeneous narrative paradigms which have their own specific and contradictory ideological meaning."[61] The novel's formal concern, then, is enacting a compromise between the two at the conclusion where everything returns to its proper place. Much of what Johnson considered novelistic was, in fact, influenced by romance if not simply categorized as one: albeit, the quieter, domestic romance that some modern critics have called eighteenth-century Richardsonian fiction. If we accept these more realistic fictions as romance, analysis still finds meaning in identifying the way such categorization undoes itself. For instance, when we experience a book as a "romance," we also note the places where it varies from romance. The interaction between romance and not-romance, then, produces meaning. Barbara Fuchs suggests this is the purpose of the use of much romance.[62] Rather than characterize entire texts, its elements are used as a strategy that interacts with itself and other forms. Texts like Walpole's that do so follow Addison's injunction to poets to write "in the fairy way."

When the women included in this study employed romance, they did so as part of larger eighteenth-century trends already documented in the above review of the time period. As Addison suggested and like Walpole, they saw the imagination as an important part of human identity and a necessary balance for reason. Furthermore, when

[61] Jameson, "Magical Narratives," 213.
[62] Fuchs, *Romance*, 112-13.

they employed romance, they did so as a strategy that would engage with itself and with the nonromance elements of their texts. The dualism of romance allowed them both to imagine future possibilities and, sometimes simultaneously, dismantle them. In fact, their generic experimentation displays both a longing for and a disavowal of the fundamental associations of romance. Their texts, then, are both about the dream of a perfect society and about romance, as a universal narrative, suggesting the ways the two could and must interact.

At the same time, these women participated in the gender politics associated with the form and their writing was subject to the ongoing, often deprecating, debate about the female imagination and appropriate reading material. In fact, one of the fundamental questions about romance posed by Newcomb, and many scholars of gothic romance before her, is "why would women have enjoyed reading romances that seem to reproduce patriarchal values?"[63] Critics writing about gothic romance have suggested several potential answers. The most recent approaches suggest gothic reading serves dual purposes: providing resistance to an ideology that imprisoned women, but also encouraging obedience to the same system. Lisa Varga adds that romance provided women with a source of unsupervised pleasure. These pleasures include not just the joy of reading, but also the pleasure of becoming literary critics in their own right and launching political arguments.[64] Newcomb suggests several additional uses of romance for women. Romance, she argues, tutors men and women in a new way of reading.

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[63] Newcomb, "Gendering Prose Romance," 129.
[64] Lisa Varga, "Women's Gothic Romance: Writers, Readers, and the Pleasures of the Form," in *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*, ed. Corinne Saunders (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 237-47.

Lastly, she claims the inset tales of romance gave women a way of knowing themselves, a position of identity.[65]

All of these suggestions are relevant to my analysis of female-authored texts in the eighteenth century. In part, I am arguing that what feminist scholarship suggests happened with the gothic, in fact happened much earlier with the use of romance. All four women in this study produce conflicted accounts of their golden world, accounts that both resist and obey. It is important to note, for instance, that while romance had the reputation for fantasy and indulgence, none of these women's fictions are indulgent. They are balanced accounts that limit romance with reason. As such, their romance strategies provide these women with covert positions as literary critics and political strategists. Additionally, I argue that romance lends Elizabeth Montagu and her sister Bluestockings a position of identity to utilize in their attempts to construct a new feminine identity that did not yet exist. These are not the identities formed by the romance rècits that Newcomb points to, but the characters of romance that Montagu and her friends used to craft a new, essential female identity. Likewise, I argue that Frances Burney uses romance as a strategy to teach the British public how to read characters, suggesting this is a key to a better functioning society. I argue Charlotte Lennox uses romance to teach women how to read the form as a tutorial for producing sons capable of using their mothers' influence to improve the world. Finally, I also argue that Sarah Scott uses the romance heroine to teach readers how to interpret and question a different form: the utopia. Romance is a productive tool in serving the imaginative purposes of Montagu, Scott, Burney, and Lennox. However, the form's usefulness can be best seen in contrast with the other literary form so often allied with imagined societies: the utopia.

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[65] Newcomb, "Gendering Prose Romance," 131-33.

Utopia

According to the work of the most essential theorist in Utopian Studies, the writings of Montagu, Scott, Burney and Lennox could be considered utopian. Ernst Bloch, in his book *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature*, argues that the art work, or what he terms the "aesthetically attempted anticipatory illumination," works as a utopia because it pushes world figures and landscapes into their "entelechical border without causing their demise."[66] According to this construction, art, including literature, is important because it both presses the outside world toward change and does so at a safe distance. This is a significant retooling of what had previously been, first, a literary trend that bridged the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, then a somewhat pejorative term synonymous with wishful thinking. Bloch argues that whether or not a novel is a utopia, it has a separate status as utopian or not utopian (ideological). The writings of these women would, by his standards, be considered utopian because rather than justify their own times, they push against the cultural boundaries of their world. They would also be considered utopian because, in spite of their mitigated response to a female society, their texts' alternative, romantic solutions to the current social order are energized with hope, the fundamental trope of utopian art according to Bloch. In other words, Bloch defines utopia as an "attitude, . . . a kind of reaction to an undesirable present and an aspiration to overcome all difficulties by the imagination of possible alternatives."[67]

However, the term "utopia" has at least four different definitions. One of these is the attitude of Bloch's description. Before that there was, first, the city or nation, itself,

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[66] Bloch, *The Utopian Fiction of Art and Literature*, 73.
[67] Fatima Vieira, "The Concept of Utopia," in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed., Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 7.

that writers' utopian imagination created; second, is the literary form, the text in which the imagined society has been placed. Finally, in addition to the generative hope that inspires writers of utopian art, utopia refers to the effect of such fiction on readers. This is utopia's function. Our concern here is primarily with the literary form, which has been defined as "the detailed and systematic description of a society better than, and in opposition to, the writer's own."[68] Fatima Vieira adds that it generally includes the following narrative moves: the narrator takes a journey, he is taken on a guided tour, he is provided with a detailed explanation of the society and how it works; finally, by implication, the narrator returns home to note the contrasts between the two locations and spread the word of his find. However, like romance, utopia can never be reduced to its content. While several narrative conventions make the form recognizable, the fundamental element of utopia is still Bloch's hope for a "Not-Yet" better world.[69]

However, until the late eighteenth century, utopias still only provided readers with a static picture of a different place, rather than an implicit belief in the potential for progress. Thomas More's inaugurating, eponymous text, *Utopia* (1516), and similar texts that followed, such as Tommaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun* (1623) and Francis Bacon's *The New Atlantis* (1626), termed classical utopias, set a conventional pattern against which all following texts could be compared. In these texts, the imagined society is described with a degree of detachment. The travel to an imaginary, nonexistent space from a real one enacts a rupture in time. This distance and disruption locates utopia in a faraway place, rather than in the future history of its readers. Such a static representation suggests, according to Vieira, that the utopian wish cannot be materialized. Eighteenth-

[68] Parrinder, "Romance and Utopia," 155.
[69] Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight, 3 vols. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

century European utopias presented similarly static dreams. Vieira, whose discussion is limited to European texts, dates the end of static utopian representations at 1771 when Louis-Sebastien Mercier wrote *Memoirs of the Year Two Thousand Five Hundred*. His text, termed a euchronia, rearranges his imagined society as future France, placing it both in the geographic space and future chronology of his readers. His restructuring suggests a greater degree of optimism and a belief that the actions of his current readers could produce the stuff of his imagination. Mercier's utopia and utopianism were a product of the political fervor circulating in a nation on the brink of revolution, as well as the new optimism about human nature, such as that found in Kant's *What is the Enlightenment?* (1784). In fact, much of the philosophy being written at the same general historical moment—Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract* (1762) for instance—has been identified as utopian itself.[70]

In fact, it is difficult to separate utopias from their sociocultural contexts, given the linking they perform between an imaginative society and the real society of the author. For example, as Vieira points out, eighteenth-century France produced much hopeful, mainstream utopian narrative and philosophy. Eighteenth-century Britain, on the other hand, did not. Most of Britain's textual utopias during the time period were more accurately critiques of the form. In fact, eighteenth-century Britain is credited with the invention of the literary dystopia, a reworking of utopia that functions the same way as its mother form, but ultimately suggests the author's original society is preferable. Vieira suggests both of these trends can be explained by the political climates of the respective countries. [71] In another example, Pohl classifies the societies imagined in eighteenth-

[70] Krishan Kumar, "The Ends of Utopia," *New Literary History*, 41, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 549-69.
[71] Vieira, "The Concept of Utopia," 11.

century European utopias into two categories: archistic, central, government-centered societies, and anarchistic, guided by an investment in personal freedoms.[72] This subcategorization reflects the liberal and conservative approaches to government found, in varying degrees, in the countries of Europe, and duplicates the author's particular position in the debate between the two.

Accounting for British utopias of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries written by women generally produces similar sociocultural interpretations. These female-authored literary utopias are generally constituted as Mary Cavendish's *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World* (1666), Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694), Delarivier Manley's *Atlantis* (1709), Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* (1762), and Lady Mary Hamilton's *Munster Village* (1778). Sometimes added is Sarah Fielding's utopian novel *David Simple* (1744) and its dystopic sequel, *Volume, the Last* (1753). These sociocultural analyses generally begin and end with feminism. The link to feminism occurs because these female-authored utopias are most often compared with their male counterparts rather than other elements of society. For instance, scholars have observed that these female-authored utopias involve little to no travel; their imagined societies generally exist within the boundaries of England. Feminist critics have argued that women's cultural distance from travel and colonization prevented them from producing a classic utopia, or what Nicole Pohl calls the geographic utopia.[73] Further, critics have suggested that the placement of the imagined female societies—generally associated with physical structures rather than land: academies, convents, country houses,

[72] Pohl, "Utopianism after More," 51.
[73] Nicole Pohl, "'The Emperess of the World': Gender and the Voyage Utopia," in *Gender and Utopia in the Eighteenth Century: Essays in English and French Utopian Writing*, eds., Nicole Pohl and Brenda Tooley (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 121-32.

brothels—within these texts represent the historic and negative conflation of women's bodies with land.[74] The geographic utopia would, theoretically, be built on the female body, and the gender flip makes such a convention uncomfortable for a female author. Ana M. Acosta, however, suggests the utopia is modeled after the male body by creating a society marked by its visibility, employing surveillance and transparency. Acosta clearly considers this association with things a position of privilege when she argues that women author utopian novels at the cost of their femininity.[75] Darby Lewes' construction, however, would reconfigure the association of utopia with the male body as a victory for women that would allow them access to the genre. Neither claim, then, can account for why women did not associate their societies specifically with land, native or foreign. Acosta's claim, along with many other critical connections between the subject of female literary utopias and their gendered cultural context, seem designed to claim these texts for feminism. However, as they do so, they focus on the elements that differentiate female-authored texts as a group from male-authored texts and the comparison is never flattering for female utopias, which come off appearing narrow and short-sighted.

Perhaps feminism is invested in female utopias because it is, itself, a branch of utopian thought. Feminism dreams of a society with gender equality. Since the world has never yet achieved such a goal, their utopianism is still in practice. As such, they share utopia's fundamental premises, but also present the potential (like any vein of criticism)

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[74] Darby Lewes, *Nudes from Nowhere: Utopian Sexual Landscape* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000).

[75] Ana M. Acosta, "Transparency and the Enlightenment Body: Utopian Space in Sarah Scott's Millenium Hall and Sade's The 120 Days of Sodom," *Gender and Utopia in the Eighteenth Century: Essays in English and French Utopian Writing*, eds., Nicole Pohl and Brenda Tooley (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 107-119.

for rewriting its claims. I would argue that perhaps the biggest failure of feminist criticism of enlightenment female-authored utopias is its redefinition of these texts as a subcategory of the form: female utopia. Thinking of these texts as female has resulted in general disappointment in the utopian vision and imagination of the women who authored them: their texts, unlike geographic utopias, do not travel, therefore they are not radical, therefore they fail to see beyond their society's cultural assumptions. However, even positive accounts of these utopias—and there are some—are problematic. Nicole Pohl and Brenda Tooley, for instance, argue that female utopias focus on creating a space for the self to develop in relationship with others.[76] Alessa Johns adds that female utopias register a positive belief that human psychology can be amended, put a stronger emphasis on community, and are practical in nature.[77] While these provide a useful description of the texts in the category of female utopia, the category and its shared allegiances can possibly obscure alliances these texts share with other texts and cultural phenomena. For instance, were *Millenium Hall* removed from its seclusion as female utopia and added to the pool of British utopias authored in the eighteenth century, I believe it is possible, at least in one sense, to see *Millenium Hall* more allied with Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) than Astell's *A Serious Proposal*. Scott is doing what Swift does: critiquing the genre, though she does so without satire and without dystopia. Additionally, this feminine categorization also emphasizes the female friendships and female communities of these books to the exclusion of other possible feminist positioning. Female communities and

[76] Nicole Pohl and Brenda Tooley, Introduction to *Gender and Utopia in the Eighteenth Century: Essays in English and French Utopian Writing*, eds., Pohl and Tooley (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 8.
[77] Alessa Johns, "Feminism and Utopia," in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*, ed., Gregory Claeys (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 174-99.

eighteenth-century feminism come to mean the same thing. I, however, will argue that Scott, Burney, and Lennox's rejection of female community is, itself, a feminist stance.

Scott's text could be more accurately reassessed if we said she *used* utopia rather than wrote it. Like romance, she uses utopia as a strategy that interacts with romance in her text to produce her particular brand of utopianism. The utopianism of the other writers in my survey escapes the inherent classificatory problems of female utopias because they blend romance with different material. This makes their utopian vision less visible, perhaps, but also less fragile. Their choice against the utopian literary form was also a choice against the paradigm of female community. They physically arranged their characters within society, but romance allowed them to code that society with their own version of wish-fulfillment.

It is worth noting that romance and utopia make a great pair. They are both born and bred in desire, and they look other places for it. One registers discontent with society, the other with life—though that can be reinscribed as any part of life. Furthermore, both are an essence as well as a literary form. However, while the forms are related, they are also different. A quick review of the differences between the two genres will illustrate what romance provides the female authors in this study.

Utopias provide usefully distant, empty spaces. Paul Ricoeur describes a utopia as an empty place in which to look at ourselves. By objectifying ourselves in the form of a city or a nation parallel to the one imagined, we are able to find ourselves, to rethink the nature of social life.[78] This is what Jameson, also, calls an "imaginary enclave within real social space."[79] All of the texts in this survey reject this distance and emptiness. Scott

[78] Paul Ricoeur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).
[79] Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 15-16.

places her society within England, a choice I believe is best understood in comparison with Burney's choice to place her characters in England, and Lennox's choice to integrate her heroines into the world. While they disable the "just distance from law" that Bloch claims is necessary, their choice suggests that women are needed within Britain.[80] The integration of women with society in all three texts reproduces structurally the symbiotic relationship the women argue for. Britain and women have to learn to get along. In some cases (Scott and Burney), this means tutoring society in how to read women; in the last case (Lennox), the female protagonist must learn to read the world. They do this with a genre characterized by plot devices that bring characters together. Romance is known for its adventures that generate spontaneous, surprising encounters between characters and for its "interleaving" technique that wraps one character's narrative around others' in the story. This interleaving and the surprise encounters of romance create a bizarre kind of unity between the elements and people of the story that figures the symbiosis needed for each writer's social restructure. Structurally, romance provides these women with a utopian model for a new social contract where every person is entangled with the others and therefore necessary. In this case, romance's improbability explains its social uses.

While Ricoeur called utopia personal (as opposed to ideology's collective), more recent writers in Utopian Studies note its focus on community. Patricia Parrinder identifies this as one of the primary differences between utopia and romance.[81] Romance's narratives focus on the individual, following him or her through a series of adventures. This is, for instance, one of the primary ways Scott's narrative departs from traditional utopias. While she gives us the backstories of all of the female founders, no

[80] Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press., 1989), 73.
[81] Parrinder, "Romance and Utopia," 156.

other enlightenment utopia singles out members of the imagined community or provides them with individual storylines. All is shared, including the story of the community. Opting for the individualistic romance allows these female writers to invest in the power of example. Instead of dictating a change that applies to everyone universally, each writer applies it to a select few women, allowing readers symbolically the power of choice. This power of choice is, essentially, a more active kind of reading that romance as a self-conscious genre enables. Active readers can distinguish between kinds of women, a key element of each text under discussion here. It is not every woman who is the key to the future of Britain and women's position within society. It is only the morally superior and duly educated. Romance assists these authors in delineating these necessary qualities.

Finally, unlike romance, utopias claim a reputation for dealing with serious issues. Though accurately imaginative, they are considered thought-experiments. As such, they tout the use of logic and reason, eschewing the passion and self-absorption for which romance is known. This is why Mary Cavendish gained the moniker "Mad Madge" after the publication of her utopia.[82] Readers saw *Blazing World* as exceeding the bounds of a rational form. The writers in this study, as I have already mentioned, produce rational, unindulgent texts balanced by their generic hybridity. Even so, their use of romance connects its cultural associations of fantasy, wish-fulfillment, and sentiment with their projects. Its presence makes these elements a subject, one of the structures of either current experience or their idealized future. Rather than disavowing fantasy, these women's texts recognize romance as a psychic part of human experience. Their texts ask what role it plays in private and public life, and what role it *should* play. Like the socialism of More's utopia, or the exceptional life-span of the people in Francis

[82] Pohl, "Utopianism after More," 52.

Godwin's (*The Man on the Moone*, 1638), romance becomes one of the recognizable, structural elements of the women's thought-experiments. By including romance, each of these authors critique the material of utopianism. Their answers vary in the following ways.

Elizabeth Montagu and the Bluestockings

Montagu and Chapter One have been left out of much of the previous discussion. That is because Montagu uses romance in her letters to access and craft a new female identity to characterize the participants in the female intellectual community she helped foster. However, she crafts a public female identity that, like the other authors in this survey, recognized woman's ties to her country and society. I begin this chapter with an overview of the Bluestocking circle as an attempt to realize a female society. From there I move to Montagu's letters, demonstrating her use of positions of identification found in romance to jump to or access an imaginary female identity for this "Not-Yet" better world. In the final section, I show the connection she makes between this female identity and her nation, using a characterization of Shakespeare to unify them. For Montagu, Shakespeare takes a place opposite literary genres such as romance, allied instead with the new Bluestocking female and British nation. The three are considered natural because they are expert in character (unlike romance), and centered between extremes (also unlike romance). The analysis of her letters suggests romance has very little place in her vision of an improved society, but that romance serves as an important stepping stone and foil for her utopian dream.

Chapter Two: Sarah Scott and *Millenium Hall*

Sarah Scott locates romance both in the society that produces the women who found Millenium Hall and in Millenium Hall itself. While she characterizes British society as romance, I argue that she combines utopian space with romance strategies in order to encourage a reform of British reading practices. In *Millenium Hall* she creates a new kind of utopia embodied by woman rather than text. In so doing, she reclaims character from that gendered and vilified form—romance—as the hope of Britain, and tutors Britain in how to read behavior rather than plot. Here, Scott's reform is necessitated by a general misunderstanding of romance. It is the public, not romance, that is the problem. By educating them in new reading practices, she identifies romance's ideal characters as the hope of Britain's future.

Frances Burney and *Cecilia*

While Frances Burney begins her career with a generically standard romance, her last three novels use romance as a complex strategy. Her use of romance suggests marriage is the structure within and around which Burney and her heroines must work to find political power. Her deviations from romance, however, suggest something more is needed. I discuss Burney's second novel, *Cecilia*, demonstrating how her complex use of romance in the novel, for instance its extended conclusion past marriage, tutors both Cecilia's husband and a British public in female experience and the costs of marriage and patriarchy on woman. Burney's writing suggests that what is needed for the reform of Britain is an understanding of feminine subjectivity. Romance is her tool to illustrate this.

Charlotte Lennox, *Harriot Stuart* and *Euphemia*

In Lennox, romance is also necessary, not to teach the public about woman, but to teach woman about the public. As scholarly reception of her most famous novel, as well as the two prominent constructions of her treatise on Shakespeare, will show, Charlotte Lennox's writing produces a condemnation of romance but also a longing for it. In this chapter, I discuss her first and last novels, arguing that both novels are pro-romance, in spite of the attendant difficulties romance produces for women. While both novels participate in this same program, I argue that Lennox locates romance's utopian possibilities in different places at the beginning of her career and at the end. First, I consider *The Life of Harriot Stuart by Herself*, where Lennox introduces us to a heroine who performs romance. I argue that this performance tutors the protagonist both in romance's enabling qualities but also its restrictions as a social construct. Lennox suggests, with the help of her heroine, that performing romance is not enough. The novel's unconventional ending suggests women also need a romance hero as male arbiter, in addition to a husband. This reconfiguration of romance is both utopian and dispirited. It suggests there is a way to increased female agency, but it places that agency in the hands of a man who is improbably good. In her final novel, *Euphemia*, Lennox argues that women can shape that improbably good romance hero. She gives us a heroine who bequeaths romance to her son. Because Euphemia adopts higher codes of behavior than that recognized in romance or the novel of manners, Euphemia is able to produce a son who becomes the male arbiter of Lennox's earlier fictional dream. Himself a figure of romance, he is able to carry his mother's trace out into the world and use her experience to improve the world.

Each of these writers produces a different relationship between romance and utopia. Elizabeth Montagu, for instance, uses romance as the shaping tool for her utopia and as a way to define it inversely. Sarah Scott uses romance's knowing characters to suggest that utopianism is just another structure that imposes on others. Frances Burney considers romance and convention one and the same. This carries with it the potential for desire and wish-fulfillment, but only if the desires are accompanied by understanding. Her utopianism consists of a compromise between male and female experience in order to adjust the status quo. Finally, Charlotte Lennox uses romance as a stand-in for dreaming. While women must understand the potential to dream, they must not do it themselves. Ultimately, that dreaming, for Lennox, is selfish when indulged in by individual women. It only becomes utopian when it is bequeathed to a son and therefore shared with the world.

I argue that these are not disappointingly conservative refutations of a proto-feminist stance. These are feminist positions. Perhaps they are more utopian than the dream of a separatist female community. A separate society of women implies, at its roots, a kind of giving up on the world, a loss of hope. A female community is an abandonment of the world, a willful ignoring of any of its elements that are not serviceable to women. It suggests that there is nothing more to be done with the public sphere. Women cannot affect the society, and society cannot acknowledge them as they desire to be. The female writers included in this survey imagine reforms that employ all elements of the polis. In so doing, they elicit a hope that a female community cannot. They imagine a public sphere that can learn and change from a woman's influence. They imagine women powerful enough to enact such change by their behavior or example

alone. In this sense, these women can be seen as more radical proto-feminists, imagining a broader role for women within a much larger space.

ELIZABETH MONTAGU AND THE BLUESTOCKINGS

As her moniker, Queen of the Bluestockings, suggests, Elizabeth Montagu was a powerful eighteenth-century woman. Historians have noted the many ways she exceeded the typical female role. These include her work in the coal industry, her philanthropy, her confrontations with men urging them to live up to their financial responsibilities, and a rhetorical style that has been described as half masculine, half feminine.[83] In these areas, as Elizabeth Child argues, Montagu's life challenged the separate spheres theory, arguing that a woman can thrive outside the boundaries of the domestic world.[84] However, in spite of these triumphs, she still sought empowerment through relationships with others. While writers in the past have taken a dark view of the Bluestocking circle's success at empowering women, most recent critical attention agrees that the Bluestocking circle, which Montagu co-organized, helped its members envision, if not realize, a greater measure of power for literary women in eighteenth-century England. As such, it is the appropriate first stage in a discussion of the dream of a female utopia in eighteenth-century Britain. In fact, the Bluestocking circle can be seen as a real-life equivalent to other women writer's own literary attempts to imagine female power. In this chapter, I will argue that Bluestockings used friendships, philanthropy, salons, letters, and

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[83] Tania Smith, "Elizabeth Montagu's Study of Cicero's Life: The Formation of an Eighteenth-Century Woman's Rhetorical Identity," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 26.2 (Spring 2008): 165-87.
[84] Elizabeth Child, "Elizabeth Montagu, Bluestocking Businesswoman," *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, eds. Nicole Pohl and Betty Schellenberg (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 2003), 153-73.

publications to imagine an empowered utopian woman with agency and purpose, central to the functioning of Britain's social and political networks.

In the first half of this chapter, I will discuss their creation of this new woman through their friendships, philanthropy, and salons. In the second half, I will discuss literary attempts to imagine this female identity that worked in tandem with their real-life experiments. Romance, I argue, provides Montagu with already available literary positions of identity which she plays with in order to craft a new feminine identity for the Bluestocking woman that does not yet exist. Finally, in the last section, I will show how Montagu uses romance to ally this new female identity with Shakespeare and, through him, Britain. For Montagu, Shakespeare, as well as the Bluestocking woman and the British nation, takes a place opposite literary genres such as romance. The three are considered natural because they are expert in character (unlike romance), and centered between extremes (also unlike romance).

While Montagu dreamed of a female society and worked towards such ends, she is included in this study as an important starting point because she formed a connective tissue between that society and Britain. Rather than imagining a separatist society, Montagu recognized the importance of woman to Britain and Britain to woman. Her vision of female empowerment identified woman's efforts to improve her status as a key to improving Britain. This is a proto-feminist position that allows woman a broad spectrum for the exertion of her abilities and dares to imagine she has capacities that make her central to the functioning of society. Like the other writers included in this study, Montagu uses romance to craft this utopian dream. Romance serves as an important stepping stone and foil for this model of an improved social contract. The

genre, then, helps her dream, but significantly, Montagu's utopian model rests on woman distancing herself from romance and embracing the rational, logical elements of society.

Part One: Female Friendship, Philanthropy, and the Salon

By Bluestockings, I am referring to a group of women in the mid-eighteenth century who believed in the ability and usefulness of women and dedicated their lives to pursuits that demonstrated such usefulness, usually through friendships with other women. The term Bluestocking has been described as a "recognizable network of women…whose public personae were built around intellectual accomplishment, female friendship, piety, and social responsibility," and who developed such ideals via "dialogue, correspondence, and exchange and . . . the shared pleasures of occupation, reading, and employment."[85] The best-known venue for the Bluestocking network were the salons held in the homes of Elizabeth Vesey and Elizabeth Montagu where such popular dissipations as gambling, card games, and gossip were forbidden and the conversation centered on literary and intellectual topics. These gatherings were initially held as proto-salons in Tunbridge Wells, and later established in their London homes of Hillstreet and Bolton Row. Bluestocking salons were not strictly female congregations. They were attended by such male cultural icons as Samuel Johnson, David Garrick, Edmund Burke, Joshua Reynolds, Benjamin Stillingfleet, Lord Bath, and George Lyttleton. However, the term Bluestocking has come to refer to the women who founded and attended such salons and, more broadly, those who embodied the Bluestocking ideals of morality and intellectual pursuit. As such, Bluestocking networks are sometimes hard

[85] Betty A. Schellenberg, "The Bluestockings and the Genealogy of the Modern Novel," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 79, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 1023. Also Eger, "Paper Trails and Eloquent Objects," 110.

to trace. Included in today's critical discussions of the Bluestockings are women such as Clara Reeve and Sarah Scott, women who lived in the country, never attended a London salon and, at least in the case of Scott, eschewed the pageantry involved in such assemblies. But Scott, for instance, held her own humbler assemblies at Bath, attended by a collection of old maids and widows, women who were "irrelevant to society."[86] Via these gatherings, Scott and her associates discussed schemes for public charity and various intellectual topics that fit her and her female associates for inclusion with the Bluestockings. Clara Reeve, also, is what Gary Kelly terms a "provincial Bluestocking" because although she had no contact with the glittering figures of Montagu's and Vesey's assemblies, she was involved in the same pursuits as the core members.[87] Thus, the Bluestocking network, while often traced through friendships and associations, is, in its larger sense, a shared ethos about woman's purpose.

This was their first gift to Britain: a new purpose for women. In fact, I argue that the primary vehicle for enlarged capacity the Bluestockings gave women was a second option for their lives other than that prescribed in the popular courtship plot of the conventional novel. Good examples of this alternative can be found in the lives of Scott and Montagu. Both women chose usefulness over the courtship plot found in the conventional eighteenth-century novel. This is, perhaps, obvious in Sarah Scott's immediate circle in Bath. Scott had been disappointed in her marriage after marrying for love. Most of her female associates—Lady Barbara Montagu, Mrs. Cutts, Sarah Fielding, Miss Arnold—were single. At least one other was a widow and another was a childless

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[86] Betty Rizzo, "Two Versions of Community: Montagu and Scott," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 65, no. 1/2 (2002): 199.
[87] Gary Kelly, "Provincial Bluestocking," *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, eds. Nicole Pohl and Betty Schellenberg (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 2003), 105-25.

married woman. These women, made irrelevant to society by their lack of connections and inability to provide heirs, focused on alternatives for women, developing "a model actually suggesting that women with a sense of mission might make a choice of the unmarried state rather than fall into it."[88] However, Elizabeth Montagu also notably chose female usefulness and ability over traditional notions of married life. Here the term "plot" becomes key. Montagu did not opt out of the courtship plot. But she did choose another story for her life, one that still today overshadows her marriage and family. She took on her husband's business interests, becoming a successful manager in her later years; she fostered female friendships and her own literary pursuits, and sought out opportunities for philanthropy and social reform. This other storyline was not filled with action and adventure. But it *was* a story.

For both sisters, the essential element of their lives that set them apart as an alternative to the courtship plot is agency. Scott, while arguably forced to search for some alternative purpose in life, chose to do more than expected and believed that it was possible to desire her course rather than marriage. Montagu, while married, chose an additional layer of meaning. Certainly, agency was one of the missing pieces in women's experience in the eighteenth century, and part of that power women lacked in the British social contract. Women were restricted in their access to education and regulated in self-expression. And while marriage was becoming more and more companionate, the wife still remained her husband's legal property.[89] In such a world, choosing a different course of life had the potential to set a woman apart simply from average experience. However, lack of agency was also modeled in courtship novels that reflected over and over a

[88] Rizzo, "Two Versions of Community," 201.
[89] These are points made by Eger, "Paper Trails and Eloquent Objects," 111-12.

singular course for females and whose "divine Mechanics" often subjected its characters to accidents and adventures that symbolized their lack of control.[90]

Not only life choices, but also female friendships allowed Bluestockings the agency the courtship plot did not. The popular courtship novel, while often employing female friends as narrative tropes through which to convey story, focused on heterosexual relations between a female and her suitors. This new feminine option, instead, focused on female friends. These friendships became the networks through which the Bluestocking ethos spread and flourished. Not only did these friendships lend solidarity and strength to this new female purpose, they also served as the foil for the lack of control figured in the novel. Female friendship offered the new Bluestocking female an arena in which she was not expected to serve the best interests of her family, duty, or social propriety. These female associations, Elizabeth Eger argues, became a powerful symbol for female agency in a world that prescribed much of female experience.[91]

The Bluestockings' lives, like their writing, offered not just an alternative plot to the novel, but a different genre: the utopia. Furthermore, they wanted woman not to simply play a role in a plotline, but to *be* the text. Many of their activities suggest the Bluestockings were in the business of searching for an ideal society. Certainly Sarah Scott's humble gatherings were. They actually produced a feminotopia and a utopian *David Simple*. As Betty Rizzo points out, Scott's collected friends at Bath actually dreamed of a better world together, so that Scott's *Millenium Hall*, while written solely

[90] Betty Schellenberg explores the influence of first-generation Bluestockings on the novel. In so doing, she argues that their choice of values and literary pursuits stood in opposition to what was then the novel, Schellenberg, "The Bluestockings and the Genealogy of the Modern Novel," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 79, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 1023. Other writers have also argued that the Bluestocking program was opposed to imaginative and emotional literature. Prominent in this discourse is Elizabeth Eger's book, whose title alone—*Bluestockings: Women of Reason*—indicates how she views the Bluestockings, *Bluestockings: Women of Reason from Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2010).
[91] Eger, "Paper Trails and Eloquent Objects," 111-12.

by Scott, was the product of their collaborative schemes. However, they also *were* that dream world, according to Rizzo. She argues that Scott's society achieved a form of equality and then equally spread charity among their less fortunate neighbors. Rizzo calls Scott's assembly an "anti-salon" and a critique of her sister's glitzier gatherings, but even Montagu's and Vesey's assemblies were searching for an ideal society.[92] Elizabeth Montagu described them as such. Elizabeth Vesey's salon, she says,

> indeed in many respects resembles Paradise, for there the Lion sits down by the Lamb, the Tyger dandles the Kid; the sly scotchman and the etourdi Hibernian, the Hero and Maccaroni, the Vestal and the demi rep, the Mungo of Ministry and the inflexible partisans of incorruptible Patriots, Beaux esprits and fine Gentlemen all gather together under the downy wing of the Sylph, and are soothed into good humour[.][93]

This excerpt from one of Montagu's letters suggests that at least Vesey's version of the Bluestocking salon achieved a form of ideal society for Montagu. It also characterizes Montagu's version of an ideal society, a gathering where people marked by their differences from each other come together and experience harmony and equality. Deborah Heller calls this ideal of Montagu's a "No-space," connecting it automatically to "Ou-topia," and by implication the literary mode.[94] With all of the political terms Montagu uses in her description of this Ou-topia, she also implies such a gathering has political weight: "Vestal," "demi-rep," "Mungo of ministry," "inflexible partisan." While these may be the best terms to represent the hyperbolic degree of harmony achieved at Vesey's salons, they also seem to suggest that for Montagu, these gatherings held

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[92] Rizzo, "Two Versions of Community," 193-214. Also, Betty Rizzo, *Companions Without Vows: Relationships among Eighteenth-century British Women* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008).
[93] Elizabeth Montagu to Elizabeth Carter, Sandleford, 4 September 1772; quoted in Harriett Guest, "Bluestocking Feminism," in *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, eds. Nicole Pohl and Betty Schellenberg (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 2003), 64.
[94] Deborah Heller, "Bluestockings and the Public Sphere," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 22, no. 2 (1998): 73.

significance for the broader public sphere. As a model of the paradisiacal ideal, they could teach the world how to achieve a similarly utopian social contract.

This mini-utopian society—perhaps more accurately stated as an ideology—promised woman a central, even essential, role. It is significant that in the above description, most of the persons Montagu identifies in the gathering are men. She gives us "scotchman," "Hero," "Maccaroni," and "fine gentlemen," in addition to the male political figures. Other than the "beaux esprits," which could be male or female, the only woman is the sylph—Vesey—who blends everyone together under her wing.[95] This is exactly the ideal role for the Bluestocking female: organizer and facilitator rather than member. This makes her not part of society, per se, but society's visionary—the text itself that imagines the possibilities. She was the co-architect of anything that happened there.

Not only can this role be found in the salons; patronage—that other major Bluestocking pursuit—also cast women as visionaries and facilitators. Eve Tavor Bannet argues effectively that while the women adopted the current system of patronage for their charitable pursuits, they transformed it from a corrupt, self-serving institution to an altruistic one. This is because they employed it to assist networks of female friends, and within these networks, charitable females became equal partners with each other in assisting and being assisted. This network replaced the stereotypical but hierarchical image of the benefactor graciously bestowing handouts to those beneath her.[96] This

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[95] Deborah Heller argues that Vesey's nickname "the sylph," allowed her to elide both masculine and feminine gender associations, providing a kind of no-space identity as well. Heller, "Subjectivity Unbound: Elizabeth Vesey as the Sylph in Bluestocking Correspondence," in *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, eds. Nicole Pohl and Betty Schellenberg (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 2003), 215-34.
[96] Eve Tavor Bannet, "The Bluestocking Sisters: Women's Patronage, Millenium Hall, and 'The Visible Providence of a Country,'" *Eighteenth-Century Life* 30, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 25-55.

change would suggest that the Bluestockings were successful visionaries, capable of seeing needs and working to meet them. More significantly, however, they were the facilitators of the patronage system. As Bannet argues, the women found themselves, via the patronage system, in a mediating position where they both needed patronage and were capable of giving it.[97] Because they filled a middling position, they could identify with multiple positions in the public sphere, and with such an understanding, they would be ideologically capable of bridging differences between stations and social positions. It is woman who can bring together Britain's political partisanships, but also its Scottish and Irish components: "the sly scotchman and the etourdi Hibernian." Again, woman is the key, the one who can see all sides, therefore making her capable of envisioning appropriate change and organizing or facilitating that change. She is essential because she is the visionary, imaginative potential for social improvement.

The Bluestocking woman is also ideally suited to be the facilitator of the British public sphere because of what she shares with her country. One popular eighteenth-century strain of national identity, according to Emma Major, and one that was employed by Montagu, styles the British as the via media or golden mean. Unlike France, Germany, or Switzerland, Britain's church, the ideology goes, is a midway point between puritanism and Catholicism; its government is a balanced system (limited monarchy); its liberty is a careful blend of freedom and legal restrictions; its society is made up of the perfect balance between rustic purity and urban civilization. In short, as the compromise or middle point, Britain is more natural than other European countries. Major identifies this strain of British national identity in Montagu's letters during her trip to France in

[97] Bannet, "The Bluestocking Sisters," 48.

1776, particularly noting its connection for Montagu to female national character.[98] The connection here is easy to see. As an individual in a middling position, the woman can identify with her country, perhaps in a way that no other person can. Again, it can be found in the above description of Vesey's salon. The salon includes those rustic parts of England—"the sly scotchman and the etourdi Hibernian,"—as well as the civilized portions—"the beaux esprit and fine gentlemen." In fact, the salon is delivered as a list of extreme positions. If Britishness is found in the compromise between these positions, then Britishness is most characterized by the Bluestocking woman, the sylph who brings them into harmony.

This new understanding of female identity and its relation to the British public sphere automatically broadens the role of women in Britain, even if only ideologically. The British woman's connection to Britain transforms her identity into a purpose. This purpose was the platform for much Bluestocking literature. In their publications, Bluestockings from Sarah Scott to Hannah More encouraged women to "'conciliate and attach the lower orders' by showing 'a kind remembrance of their wants, an affectionate concern for their welfare, and a desire to promote their real interests.'"[99] The shared perspective of the Bluestockings was that the educated British female could be the "salvation of the nation" if she would return to her country estate, in other words locate herself in a physical middle ground, and attend to her neighbors and tenants there.[100] As the recipient of patronage herself, she was particularly suited to give it. She was Britain's utopian hope.

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[98] Emma Major, "Femininity and National Identity: Elizabeth Montagu's Trip to France," *ELH* 72, no. 4 (Winter 2005): 901-918.
[99] *Works of Hannah More*, 12 vols. (London, 1818) 7:187. Also quoted in Bannet, "The Bluestocking Sisters," 52.
[100] Bannet, "The Bluestocking Sisters," 36.

While this was the utopian ideal of the Bluestockings, critics disagree about whether they successfully impacted the British social contract or created a space for the new female in that contract. Montagu's and Vesey's salons garnered both praise and criticism from their participants. Hannah More celebrated them in her poem "Bas Bleu." But other attendees were less glowing in their accounts of the hostesses, the physical arrangements, and the conversation. Lady Louisa Stuart, for instance, claimed that Montagu was not good at unifying her assembled guests.[101] Others reported that Montagu was riddled with vanity, that her conversation style was combative. Elizabeth Vesey, conversely, was lampooned for being deaf. Burney depicts her running from conversation to conversation with an ear piece trying to garner information and getting none.[102] As to the physical arrangements, Stuart and Burney both complained about the semicircles in which Montagu always arranged the seats.[103] However, in the same way Montagu's assemblies garnered criticism for her semicircles, Vesey's were lampooned because of her lack of circles. Burney said, "Her fears were so great of the horror, . . . of a circle, . . . that she pushed all the small sofas, as well as chairs, pell-mell about the apartments, so as not to leave even a zig-zag path of communication free from impediment . . . an arrangement that could only be eluded by such a twisting of the neck as to threaten the interlocutors with a spasmodic affection."[104] Salon conversation was also problematic for

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[101] "She had quick parts, great vivacity, no small share of wit, a competent portion of learning. . . . But there was a deplorable lack of one requisite—of that art of kneading the mass well together, which I have known possessed by women far her inferiors. As her company came in, a heterogeneous medley, so they went out, each individual feeling himself single, isolated, and (to borrow a French phrase) embarrassed with his own person;" See Lady Louisa Stuart, *Selections from her Manuscripts*, ed. Hon. James Home (New York and London: Harper Brothers, 1899), 157-58.

[102] As quoted in Heller, "Bluestockings and the Public Sphere," 74.

[103] "Everything in that house, as if under a spell, was sure to form itself into a circle or semicircle." See Stuart, *Selections from her Manuscripts*, 157-58.

[104] Madame D'Arblay, *Memoirs of Doctor Burney*, 3 vols. (London: Edward Moxon, 1832), 2:264. Also quoted in Heller, "Bluestockings and the Public Sphere," 74.

many. Mary Delany complained that there was no time for private conversation.[105] Burney depicts a conversation at Montagu's salon as dominated by its hostess: "The Bishop [of Chester] waited for Mrs. Thrale to speak, Mrs. Thrale for the Bishop; so neither of them spoke at all! Mrs. Montagu cared not a fig, as long as she spoke herself, and so harangued away."[106] Another report claimed that Montagu's circles and therefore the conversations they engendered were stratified, noting that Montagu always sat at the head of the circle with the greatest wit at her side. These comments generally point to failed expectations for harmony and equality—both of which were supposed to be the Bluestocking female's terrain.

However, these comments also reveal a lack of agreement about how harmony and equality should function. The semicircles were problematic because they forced everyone into the same conversation, making them witness to a restructuring of hierarchy and because they disallowed private conversations. However, the absence of semicircles marred the unity of the group and the success of private conversations. Does unity consist of a single purpose (Vesey) or a single conversation (Montagu)? Either answer results in an infringement of free will. The single conversation prevents people, ironically, from participating in the discussion and keeps them from private interactions. The single purpose creates a cacophony that infringes on itself. Which is more central to harmony, then: unity or free will? And is the conflict between the two not an implicit negation of harmony? Again, how is equality best represented? As equally involved in one endeavor

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[105] "I had a whisper with Mrs. Boscawen, another with Lady Bute, and a wink from the Duchess of Portland—poor diet for one who loves a plentiful meal of social friendship." Mary Delany. See Lady Augusta Llanover, *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Mary Granville*, *Mrs. Delany*, 6 vols. (London: Richard Bentley, 1861-62), 2nd ser., 1:204-5.

[106] Quoted in Heller, "Bluestockings and the Public Sphere," 71; See also *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay,* ed., Charlotte Barrett, 7 vols. (London, 1842-46), 1:364.

(Montagu), an ideal that dismantles itself when, as participants claimed, inequality emerged; or equal in rights (Vesey), a set-up that Burney claimed diminished the speaking capacity of all, equally? At the very least, the responses to Bluestocking salons indicate the difficulty of what the women were trying to do.

However, modern critics have recuperated the equality of the Bluestocking salon by pointing out its innovations in structure. For one, it replaced social status with merit, choosing attendees for what they could bring to the discussion rather than their rank in civil society. Even if merit reorganized itself as a form of hierarchy at Bluestocking gatherings, it was still a reform of the system of rank employed elsewhere. Additionally, Bluestocking salons aimed at an Enlightenment model of conversation that gave reason authoritative power. This conversational ideal manifests itself as "universalized, disembodied minds conversing freely . . . unrestricted by bodies, differences or any other contingent encumbrances of reality."[107] The goal of this kind of conversation was to erase any kind of physical differences imported by the body or the physical surroundings. Gender would be gone. So would race and station. All that would be left is reason conversing with reason. That this failed to some degree is evident in the above criticisms of Bluestocking conversation. However, as Deborah Heller has already argued, this was not a total loss. Instead, the salons became the site for tension and interaction between this disembodied model of conversation and a "substitutionalist universalism" that favors the white male. In spite of the tension between the two models, the attempt at enlightened, egalitarian conversation allowed women glimpses of what it was like to participate in and be co-architects of the public sphere.[108] However, glimpses were

[107] Heller, "Bluestockings and the Public Sphere," 73.
[108] Ibid., 59-82.

essential for these women. Harriet Guest points out that because the salons invited politicians into their circle as "human beings pure and simple," they allowed women to converse equally with them on political topics. The impression this gave women of being politically significant, she argues, was not then a reality but led to increasing degrees of female political involvement.[109]

However, this enlightened conversation was also doing battle with prevailing notions of polite conversation—especially polite *female* conversation, whose primary characteristic was social harmony. Burney's description of Montagu's conversational style, for example, is particularly instructive. She describes her speech as "haranguing," and implies, therefore, that she was vain. This critique comes, I argue, from a misunderstanding about conversation. Montagu's conversation seemed combative perhaps because Burney could not divorce Montagu from her gender. As a result Montagu, instead modeling what a contemporary called her "masculine understanding," came across as combative.[110] Clinging to the conventions of polite female conversation, such as the whispers and winks for which Delany pined, Burney and others failed to recognize Montagu's as proof that "it was possible for Enlightenment men and women to share . . . rhetorical models."[111] They saw the gap between her performance and convention as a rift rather than an example worth following. In other words, they rejected the public sphere, preferring the image of woman as facilitator rather than woman as participant, but this is not a total loss either. Burney, Delany, and the other women at the assemblies were offered a choice in conversational style. That position gave women

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[109] Harriet Guest, "Bluestocking Feminism," *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, eds. Nicole Pohl and Betty Schellenberg (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 2003), 64.
[110] As quoted in Heller, "Bluestockings and the Public Sphere," 72.
[111] Smith, "Elizabeth Montagu's Study," 186.

agency to negotiate their own place among the options available. The salons, in turn, became "rhetorical schools and venues of rhetorical performance."[112]

In summary, female friendships, philanthropy, and the salon allowed Bluestockings to imagine a new woman with agency and a central, national purpose as visionary and facilitator. While this empowered woman was, perhaps, limited to a fictional, utopian ideal, it netted profits for women as an alternative to the prescriptive course laid out for them in eighteenth-century England. It also paid later dividends in encouraging a broadened female political role.

Part Two: Letters and Publication

While Bluestockings imagined a space for women through their active pursuits, they also did so in their writing. Montagu's letters, in fact, serve as a supplement to the work of her and her female companions. The literary analogue she and her correspondents create for themselves in their letters through their allusiveness and experimentation with other genres and texts—as their other pursuits did—casts the novel, with its romance lineage, as the foil for the women's lives and the Bluestocking ethos. However, her letters also cast the novel as the foil for Shakespeare, shedding light on her treatment of the national bard in print. Charlotte Lennox, another eighteenth-century woman writer on Shakespeare, presents the bard as a failed romance writer. In her *Shakespear Illustrated: Or the Novels and Histories, on Which the Plays of Shakespear are Founded* (1753-4), Lennox focuses over and over again on his poor plots. Montagu, on the other hand, is invested in seeing Shakespeare not so much as an artist or a practitioner, but more accurately as the seat of character development, and window to all

[112] Ibid., 167.

that is natural. Her *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare* (1769) focuses on Shakespeare's grasp of character, and largely ignores his invention of plot, what many saw in the eighteenth century as his weakness. In her letters, we also see Shakespeare as the source of all truth about people. However, we also see the novel and its romance predecessors as the source of narrative movement, or plot, the opposite or antithesis of Shakespeare and nature. Ultimately, Montagu's letters forge a likeness between the Bluestocking female and the national bard. In discussing Montagu's letters—which are vast and numerous—I will be drawing from the letters found in the Montagu collection at the Huntington Library, and focusing primarily on those epistles written by Montagu and her female correspondents between the years 1747 and 1762, the time that saw the formation of the Bluestocking salons and the beginning of her years of literary productivity.

Many references to modern novels in Bluestocking letters work to characterize what the womens' lives are *not.* For instance, in a letter to Lady Barbara Montagu, Elizabeth Montagu writes "in the days of Don Quixote, Inns were full of Adventures, at present they only produce fat Landladys and pert Drawers."[113] Here, what Montagu encounters while traveling are characters and furniture. These characters are juxtaposed with "Adventures," the momentum or plot of the novel by Cervantes. The comparison would suggest that their lives are not defined by action, but by interaction with people and material culture. This is emphasized in a passage from another letter written by Montagu to the Duchess of Portland. "In our road thither," she writes, "one of the wheels took fire & burnt thro' the axle tree; with much ado we reach'd the Grotto, . . . but having none of this Divine machinery with which Poets accommodate Heroes &

[113] E. Montagu to Lady Barbara Montagu, May 16, 1748, London, England. MO 1646.

Heroines, . . . we were compell'd to implore the assistance of meer mortals." Later, after narrating their efforts to fix the carriage which involved encounters with a drunk mechanic and an extra stay at an inn, she adds, "we came Home laughing at our adventures which we arrogantly compared to those of the valourous Quixote, or marvellous Robinson Crusoe."[114] In this passage, Montagu does experience an adventure, but it is linked to the novel simply because it is an atypical, abnormal episode. Ironically, it is initially the cessation of movement as figured by their travel that translates into a connection with Don Quixote and Robinson Crusoe. However, more accurately, it is the advent of something unplanned, which then compels unexpected action, that makes this event novel-like. The carriage wheel takes fire, which requires them to seek help, but being in the country, the only man capable of helping them is drunk, which requires a lot of wheedling, which results in very little, which compels them to stay the night. A simple, presumably well-planned excursion to a Grotto turns into an elaborate overnight affair that spirals out of their control from one event to another. Montagu links this event to the novel presumably because she recognizes in it the laws of fate that govern plot and therefore shape the genre. When her life exceeds the norm, the novel gives her a way to talk about it, but in the process, it characterizes lived experience—or what females perceive as lived experience—as other than the novel. Lived experience, it implies, is rational, not a series of adventures. It locates the driving force of life's action as the mind, its ideas and thoughts—the faculty that recognizes that inns often have fat landladies, for instance, or that drawers can seem pert. The novel's logic, however, suspends that

[114] E. Montagu to Margaret (Harley) Cavendish, Duchess of Portland, Aug. 23, 1747, Sandleford, Herefordshire. Parts of this letter published in Emily Climenson, ed., *Elizabeth Montagu, the Queen of the Bluestockings: Her Correspondence from 1720 to 1761*, 3 vols. (London: William Clowes and Sons, 1906), 1:245-46.

control, passing it to cosmic or divine sources, removing the emphasis from thought and analysis to event. Plot, then, is the antithesis of lived existence.

Yet both of these references reflect on specifically female experience in other ways. They suggest the novel functions for Montagu as a dream or wish of what she could be. It is interesting, for instance, that in both of these cases, Montagu identifies herself with a male protagonist. The first identification is less overt. She is simply successor to Don Quixote in experience with inns. In the second, she writes that she and her female companion "arrogantly compared" their adventures to Quixote and Robinson Crusoe—more specifically with "the *valourous* Quixote," and the "*marvellous* Robinson Crusoe." She chooses these protagonists over other equally available female protagonists, such as Clarissa or Pamela. There are a number of fairly obvious reasons why Montagu chooses Quixote and Crusoe. Not only do they exist (like Clarissa and other female characters) in a genre that is, at least for the Bluestockings, characterized by excessive movement or adventures, but unlike their female equivalents, they both star in stories characterized by travel. Since Montagu and her friend were traveling, the connection is natural. Most of the female characters in both of these novels are placed, while the men travel to or from them. Crusoe's wife and children stay at home in England for the duration of his journeys. Quixote's Dulcinea is a barmaid at an inn and stays there, while Quixote travels through, and beyond. They are what Teresa de Lauretis argues all women are in narrative: "an element of plot-space, a topos, a resistance, matrix and matter" along the track of a narrative whose forward motion is always male and impelled by a man.[115] For the most part, this does not change even when the main character is female. Novel

[115] Teresa de Lauretis, *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984), 119.

heroines such as Clarissa are also associated with place. Clarissa is an underservant at Mr. Lovelace's estate. Though she changes location several times during the novel, primarily her adventures come to her, rather than her traveling to them, as Crusoe and Quixote do. The story is the same, regardless of the degree of attention the woman gets. Lauretis argues that these are gendered narrative positions that force all readers into one of two positions: male/hero/human or female/obstacle/boundary/space. She also claims that these narrative positions are a product of the culture in which they exist. Montagu's choice of identification here reminds us of the difference between male and female experience—both cultural and in narrative. The fact that Montagu and her friend must seek out a remedy to this unforeseen disaster is abnormal. While "marvelous" is generally a term used to refer to a novel as a whole because of its improbable and inexhaustible series of adventures, as the agents of (attempted) change in the story, the two women dare to compare themselves to a character who is "marvellous" himself due to his improbable and inexhaustible response to his set of adventures. They also compare themselves to the "valourous" Quixote, though he is perhaps more valorous in spirit than in actuality. Montagu's claim that they did so "arrogantly" suggests a gap between the fictional heroes and themselves, but the gap is a gendered one, present because of the different possibilities available to men in narrative and in experience. The "arrogantly" serves as a fissure in the narrative, allowing Montagu to both present the comparison between themselves and male heroes and then take it away. Additionally, the light-hearted tone of the passage suggests this is a kind of play for Montagu. She is toying with other identities—her own kind of fictional exercise.

The above passages demonstrate the simplicity of Betty Schellenberg's observation that while the Bluestockings despise the novel formally, their references to it in their letters suggest a habit of identifying with the characters.[116] Certainly the Bluestockings are well practiced in identification, yet that identification is clearly a complex event. As de Lauretis argues, female identification is never simple or single. In another letter Montagu writes to Benjamin Stillingfleet, responding to his comments about *Dialogues of the Dead* which she co-wrote with Sir George Lyttelton. In a discussion of female writing that this subject produced, she associates herself with yet another novel character, an allusion that again shows the complexity of her identification:

> I am vain of your partiality to ye writer of ye dialogues which makes you read it with such indulgence. I really love scribbling, but I do not think it an innocent amusement in an age in which trifling books choak up & obstruct the road to real knowledge. The opinions of a Betsey Thoughtless would make a worse book than ye history of her actions. The disadvantages of a Womans education are not to be got over but by a force of talents & energy of soul which I am not bless'd with, . . . See therefore ye difference of your care & mine.[117]

Montagu's discussion of her own writing morphs into a comparison between Eliza Haywood's Betsy Thoughtless and the hypothetical female in eighteenth-century England. As it does so, Montagu gets lost in the analogy. With whom, exactly, does Montagu identify? Before the comparison, she is the writer who feels the vanity of a positive response to her work. After the comparison, she is not blessed with the "force of talents & energy of soul" needed to overcome the drawbacks to female education. In truth, she has detached herself from Betsy with her subjunctive construction: "would make a worse book." Betsy Thoughtless becomes, instead of a strict identification, a

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[116] Betty Schellenberg, "The Bluestockings and the Genealogy of the Modern Novel," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 79, no. 4 (Fall 2010): 1023-34.
[117] E. Montagu to Benjamin Stillingfleet, ca. 1760, MO 5116.

point of reference on a scale of experience. She mediates between Montagu's experience writing as a woman, and Stillingfleet's reader response as a man. While she does not identify with Betsy Thoughtless, she recognizes her nearness to her in relation to Stillingfleet, or men. In other words, the character serves as a monitor for the difference between female and male experience. No, she is not Betsy Thoughtless, but she uses Betsy to point out that she is—even more so—not a man. As she concludes, "See therefore ye difference of your care & mine."

In these excerpts, Montagu uses identification—that thread between character and reader—to work toward a new female identity. Felicity Nussbaum argues that eighteenth-century women's self-writing redefines the individual as a position, a place where discourses intersect.[118] That is just what Montagu's letters do. Her letters are her attempts to represent herself, but she does so by "adopt[ing] positions available within language at a given moment, rather than being the source of [her] own self-generating."[119] In this case, the available positions she utilizes are those scripted by the novel. Instead of characterizing herself directly as a female writer—a position that was not well defined or well received at the time—she gives us Betsy Thoughtless and negotiates the distance between herself and the character. Rather than defining herself explicitly or even allowing the experience to speak for itself, Montagu adopts Quixote and Crusoe and plays with the difference. In other words, Montagu utilizes gendered positions found in the novel and navigates between them, but the navigating that she does is important. Her work with these references tells us that she is both Quixote and not Quixote; neither a

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[118] Felicity Nussbaum, "Eighteenth-Century Women's Autobiographical Commonplaces," in *The Private Self: Theory and Practice of Women's Autobiographical Writings*, ed. Shari Benstock (Chapel Hill & London, University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 147-71.
[119] Ibid., 149.

female protagonist nor a male protagonist; that she is neither Betsy Thoughtless, nor a man. Her allusions allow "alternative discourses of 'experience'" to intersect just long enough to argue that neither satisfies, that an important and valid position is missing.[120] The new female identity is that nowhere space between the positions she allows to clash in her writing.

This technique is perhaps even more visible in a letter written by Mary Anstey to Elizabeth Montagu. Here, Anstey writes herself, adopting the discourse of the modern novel, but as she does so, she "allows alternative discourses of 'experience' to erupt at the margins of meanings."[121] Anstey narrates a chance encounter between herself and a potential marriage partner. As she does so, she employs the narratorial voice of a novel. She says, "I found myself . . . in the most strange uncouth place I ever saw . . . but my feet happily directed me . . . My feet shall have the whole merit of it." Immediately she imports the marvelous: "the most strange . . . I ever saw," but she also incorporates the novelistic laws of fate.[122] Her own control is suspended. Instead, something else is governing the action. However, rather than attribute control to the divine or the cosmic, she gives it to something that is both her and not her. She attributes this encounter primarily to her feet rather than to her own rational faculty. Later on, she attributes the next event to "My evil genius." "My evil genius" suggests a separate entity, yet one that she owns. Likewise, her feet are hers, but are not her thinking faculty—the opposite of it, actually—hence, an absence that is owned by her. These attributions are indicative of the interesting place Anstey is navigating, serving as both narrator and protagonist of the same story. As the voice as well as the actor, she cannot entirely defer responsibility, but

[120] Ibid., 149.
[121] Ibid., 149.
[122] Mary Anstey to E. Montagu, August ca. 1750, MO 105. See full text of letter in the Appendix.

she cannot claim full responsibility either. The story is both hers and not hers, both personal and other. This does the same thing for her that Montagu's allusions did in her letters. They provide positions—in this case the generic novel writer and the generic novel protagonist—with which Anstey may play. However, already these are competing positions that make her simultaneously both and neither.

While Anstey adopts the discourse of the novel in order to comment on the irrational and unreal elements of her encounter, she simultaneously codes the discourse as rational. After adopting this novelistic voice, for instance, she suspends it at one point just long enough to comment on her narrative strategy. "I need not tell you," she says, "from whom [the voice] proceeded: there are some certain trifles that would not agree with the Romantick turn of this Adventure; but as you know Sophia Western would in my situation have mett Tom Jones, or Clarrissa have been surprised by Mr Lovelace, you will easily guess the Knight errant of your friend." Here, she is both apologizing for not following one set of rules, and reminding Montagu that she is following another. However, she is also making clear the source of those rules. For Sophia Western, it will always be Tom Jones; for Clarissa, always Mr. Lovelace. Follow the logic, she is saying, as I am. This is particularly interesting since her narration is much more informative than the average novel on the subject of her absent rationality—as if making it clear that her mind is still at work: "for indeed," she says, "my thinking faculty was at that time traviling in the Road to Hinchingbroke, & would have pursued the journey further if it had not suddenly been calld back." While the novels Anstey specifically mentions participate in a growing interest in characters' interiority, the logic of the novel does not require them to. Since the series of adventures that make up a novel often suspend the

locus of control from the mind to a divine source, the conventional investment in such surprising encounters is the adventure itself. The concern of the novel was only beginning to focus on the interior regions of the brain. This account, however, does more than just participate in a growing interest in interiority. It almost elevates her mind to the status of character. While her feet are driving her towards a strange adventure, her mind is taking its own journey in pursuit of Montagu. When she writes "and would have pursued the journey further," the automatic misreading the construction encourages is that *she* is the subject who would have pursued the journey. It is only after we encounter the "it" that comes next and pursue a careful rereading that we realize she is referring to her mind. In other words, not only is the narration uncharacteristic, so is the main character, who, though acting the part of the typical heroine, is also manifesting a penchant for rational interiority. She is split between two modes: Her feet have accidentally gone one direction, but her mind has chosen to go another. It also, however, reminds us that she *is* her mind in a way she is not her feet.

It is Montagu, or female friendship, that engages Anstey's rational parts. Anstey may be participating in an episode from a novel, but simultaneously, her mind is choosing something entirely different, and that is Montagu. There is no fortuitous connection here between her mental musings and the workings of fate. It is to Montagu she points out the rationality of this irrational narration. It is with Montagu that her mind is engaged when it occurs. Montagu, or female friendship, is the seat of her reason, but also her choice. The novel, then, with its courtship plot, becomes the opposite of this rational discourse between friends—irrational, and out of her control. It is when the narration concludes that Anstey fully realizes that reason-based thought that Montagu

represents throughout. She does not change subjects or end the letter when the "History [Montagu] desired" is over. Instead, she reasons it out:

> For my own part my sentiments agree with yours in respect to the Happyness of being the companion & friend of a man of sence & virtue; that he is such I do not question, yet his regard & affection for me, on which all depends, is a matter still in need of confirmation. I would not have his future tenderness for me depend altogether on his virtues; & indeed I often think that at my time of life, & with such great personal disadvantages, I can scarce enter into the marry'd state with any better hopes than to meet with cold indifference & this I am sure would not make me happy.

Here, the reader can see Mary Anstey clearly weighing every factor involved in a marital arrangement. The reasoning is such that, via (this letter to) her female friend, she transforms what was an accidental, novelistic, romantic adventure into a rational choice of her own.

In between the beginning of her chance encounter and the end of her letter where she transposes the novel into rational female conversation, Anstey encounters yet another kind of discourse. This transition is signaled by the voice that calls, not to her but to her mind, as if to suggest an intersection between her mental and her physical adventures. This new discourse that she is called to engage with mentally is conversation with her "Knight errant," and his male companion. However, even as she is called to engage with them mentally, what follows is full of conjecture and uncertainty. She writes: "what was their discourse at this time, I cannot exactly tell; but by some hints given me I was led to conjecture the subject of it was not very remote from the person they happened to meet." Again, she says, "from this conversation I conjectured whether truly or not I cannot tell, that this gentleman was the very person who was present at the discourse you had." And again, "I fanceyd then, from his manner of Behavior to me, that he was not entirely

ignorant of his friends thoughts." In all of these cases, Anstey is trying to follow the clues the men are giving her about the situation and her role in it. Her comments indicate both that she is working hard to intuit the underlying connections at play in this encounter, but also that, in spite of her efforts, she is falling short. "The subject of it was not very remote from the person they happened to meet," she writes, with the most remote possible connection between herself and their subject, the two things the sentence is intended to bring together. The uncertainty this sentence enacts, in company with her other commentary about the two men and what her role between them is, provides a sense of lost control parallel to that provided by the novel. While this discourse—peppered as it is with references to real people and real places Mrs. Montagu would recognize—is more realistic than the novel, it presents an interesting cohesion with the literary form.

The combination of the two suggests that both the novel and real life contain within them gendered positions that intersect with each other. In fact, one has to wonder why Anstey chooses to cast herself in the novel's female role when Montagu has demonstrated the freedom to identify with the male role. One answer to this question would be that it more clearly reflects her actual experience. However, the choice also allows her to demonstrate the similarities, and gifts her with more room to navigate, between positions. She both aligns with and detaches from the heroine position—not because she misunderstands, but because she masters it. However, while Anstey has clearly mastered the novel's discourse, enough to imitate it, she lags behind in this other, male discourse. However, because her imitation of the novel has demonstrated, ironically, her intelligence, the failure of this male discourse to signify fully cannot be laid at her feet. Rather, she is picking up exactly what the men expect her to. She is, after

all, given "some hints," by them and "led to conjecture." I would argue that these shaky conclusions *are* the female position, one defined by the absence of full participation in male discourse, but the female position is one she eschews also when she tells Montagu that "his regard & affection for me, . . . is a matter still in need of confirmation." She expects to get her own information and make a decision only when she has it all. However, even while she ruminates to Montagu on the advantages and disadvantages of this potential match, she does so with an eye toward love (something Montagu did not have). "If I did not believe my self possess'd of his affection," she says, "I could not entirely surrender my own." Mutual affection, that happy accident that is the ultimate goal of all other happy accidents in the popular novel, is Anstey's end goal as well, but her route to it is reason. In other words, she is navigating a position for herself somewhere between novel and reality. In sum, her account navigates between heroine and female positions, not claiming either, but using them to argue for or long after another position in the nowhere space she initially places herself: somewhere between controller and controlled, or writer and character with a fully functioning subjectivity.

These examples bear out an association, for the Bluestockings, between the novel and plot—or at least a certain kind of plot characterized by adventures and excessive movement. However, it is worth pointing out that the plot that most characterizes the novel in these accounts is a debt from the romance tradition. In fact, movement *is* romance. Northrop Frye, who in most accounts marks the beginning of critical attention to the romance, counted romance not as a genre, but as a "generic plot," a structure of movement that can be found in many texts.[123] While romance has been assessed in many

[123] Northrop Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), 162.

other senses since, this initial account is useful. It is this generic plot that Anstey recognized that led to her adopting the novel as a narrative style. It is the recognizable plot structure that compelled Montagu and her friend to make the connection between themselves and fictional characters. More broadly, as a "verbal imitation of ritual or symbolic human action," romance's generic plot is what de Lauretis recognizes as the location of those gendered positions produced by myth and picked up by narrative.[124] In fact, in her writing, "narrative" is, for the most part, exchangeable with romance. Other critical writers on romance have pointed out this mimetic quality of the form, noting its ability to reproduce social order and social ideals.[125] As such, it is always concerned with society—but at a remove. Romance is also, paradoxically, characterized by a choice against realism, an alternative to it. As such, romance also carries with it, as Frye has also noted, a strain of "wish-fulfillment."[126] This makes romance the perfect vehicle for movement, not just the movement traditionally defined by plot, but also movement between what is and what could be.

This is how Montagu uses romance in her letters—as a vehicle for imaginative movement between positions of identification. Montagu most often does this by deploying romance as a mode or discourse that generates a kind of play. In the decade before the publication of *An Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare*, for instance, Montagu carries on correspondences with several men connected to her Bluestocking salons, much of which is particularly flirtatious. The flirtations often occur

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[124] Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), 55.
[125] Fiona Price, "'Inconsistent Rhapsodies': Samuel Richardson and the Politics of Romance," in *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary* , ed., Corinne Saunders (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 269-86.
[126] Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism*, 186.

via the romance mode. Stephen Bending has already noted persuasively Montagu's use of pastoral romance for self-posturing in these written interactions with Lord Bath and Lord Lyttelton. Like Nussbaum, Bending argues that Montagu adopts culturally available positions in her self-writing in order to explode or transform them. He writes that instead of giving her a singular identity, the pastoral-romance mode allows Montagu to move back and forth between the pastoral paradigm and other cultural associations that connect the female and rural landscapes. In her generic play, she is the dutiful female resigned to social retirement, the female abnegating responsibility, and the seductive female of the garden. Furthermore, in the movement between the positions, she is also none of them. According to Bending, the most important outcome of this generic play is the capacity it gives Montagu to defer her status as a socialite or fine lady.[127]

However, Montagu also uses the language of romance stripped of its pastoral associations to similar ends. In July 1760, she writes to Benjamin Stillingfleet, "Monsey & I love one another as if we were in ye first page of our novel, we have gone visiting together in a post chaise, we have had assignations even at ye holy palace of ye archbishop, besides ten thousand little tendernesses, indeed I think we have traveled through ye whole carte du tendre according to ye best edition of Clelia."[128] The point of this passage seems to be that she and Monsey are getting along well, but the account is couched in the terminology of romance—generated, in fact, by it. Her choice of mode allows her, while saying one thing about a friendship, to toy with an entirely different identity—that of the seductive, romantic heroine. At the same time, however, this account does not ever take that identity seriously, and it is the romance mode that codes this

[127] Stephen Bending, "Mrs. Montagu's Contemplative Bench: Bluestocking Gardens and Female Retirement," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 69, no. 4 (Dec. 2006): 555-580.
[128] E. Montagu to Benjamin Stillingfleet, July 1760, MO 5113.

rendering as simply play. Their post chaise visits and assignations, which are generated by romance themselves, are immediately extended into the ridiculous by traveling through the allegorical "carte du tendre" for which Madeleine de Scudery's romances are known. This is the imaginative movement generated by the use of romance, and that imaginative movement seems to be the point here. It serves as a foil to the otherwise static sameness of female existence. Romance, then, gives Montagu a place of imaginative resort to which she can turn as an alternative to her life as appropriate and exemplary female, but it is a place she would not be allowed if it was not marked as an alternative to realism by romance conventions.

Another Bluestocking letter demonstrates this same technique: the use of romance to go to mental and intellectual places otherwise not allowed. In this case, the writer, Sarah Sloane Stanley, starts with a particular text then transitions into romance as mode.

> I once began to read Amadis (but was so shocked in the first Page to find a certain great Princess at the end of the Romance with le Roi Perrion) that I have never taken up the Book again, & therefore am not qualified to judge of the Princess Orianas behavior under the cruel suspicions you mention, but as I conclude Amadis was not only a true Knight, but an Ardent & devoted Lover to Oriana, he deserv'd every mark of despair that she could give under the apprehension of his being unfaithful, but had he presumed to give her undoubted proofs of a settled indiference before the eyes of the whole Universe, without even the common excuse of his hearts being surpriz'd by the charms of another Beauty, however distracted the first blow might make her, I can scarse imagine the strictest Romance woud have allow'd her to pine after a Lover so unworthy the delicacy & sincerity of her Passion let the merit of that illustrious Hero have been ever so great in all other respects; & had some Gallant Prince been so fortunate to rescue her from the Embraces of a frightful Satyr (some such triffling Service being absolutely necessary to introduce him to Oriana) might he not be permited to hope (tho perhaps not within a few months) that his valour would be rewarded, but we must make large allowance for the diference in Cupids arithmetic in those times & the present, as I am perswaded he provided his Votaries with a more valuable [hand] than he has yet imparted to us.[129]

[129] Sarah (Sloane) Stanley to E. Montagu, Aug. 22, 1760, Clewer, Berkshire, MO 5078.

This account is riddled with asides on the mechanics of the romance: "some such triffling Service being absolutely necessary" "the strictest Romance woud have allow'd," and "we must make large allowance for the diference in Cupids arithmetic in those times & the present." In fact, since Stanley prefaces her discussion with the fact that she put the book down and is not qualified to discuss Amadis or Oriana (a comparison Montagu presumably requested), it is clear that she is discussing the possibilities of plot based off of the rules of romance rather than the specific book. In doing so, she seemingly authors the book herself, being well-versed enough in the grammar of romance to be able to anticipate what comes next. The extended discussion she provides here moves her commentary from what would be a critical analysis of *Amadis de Gaul* to a discussion of the genre, but her use of romance becomes a mode rather than a subject under discussion once we realize her true subject matter. This realization comes later when she says "but *our* Amadis can hardly have left any remains of his Passion in the heart of his Princess nor no Ideas, but what (I am sorry to say it) are disadvantageous to him by reminding her how undeservedly she has suffer'd from it & how strongly she has felt it, I have been an eye witness myself." With this new information, a rereading gives us a summary of what happened in the episode under discussion. Some man, bound to some woman by a previous agreement, has shown "her undoubted proofs of a settled indiference before the eyes of the whole Universe." She, therefore, has turned her attention elsewhere.

Stanley's discussion of *Amadis de Gaul* reproduces the gendered positions of romance, reminding us what is available to the heroine and what to the hero: heroines are only allowed to pine after men who deserve them—again they are static, pining, and waiting rather than moving. Furthermore, men—though they often must wait awhile—are

eventually rewarded for their valour. They are the source of action. These suggest there is a form of justice involved in the grammar of romance.

However, Stanley's account complicates that profession of justice and questions the equity of the gendered positions by also reproducing the (ungendered?) position of reader. Stanley prefaces her account with information that identifies her as a reader: "I once began to read Amadis (but was so shocked in the first Page to find a certain great Princess at the end of the Romance with le Roi Perrion) that I have never taken up the Book again." This reaction lends interiority and subjectivity, not to the heroine or the hero, but to the reader, and it is a subjectivity that trumps the experience of hero and heroine. The injustice she laments is for the female who is found "*with* le Roi Perrion." Later, her sympathies are similarly with the female, who "has suffer'd from it & how strongly she has felt it, I have been an eye witness myself." As reader, rather than heroine or hero, Stanley is able to launch a critique of female oppression within the fictional world. However, the fictional world also lends her a disguise with which to carry out the same critique of the realistic world—a place she would not otherwise have been able to go.

This critique of female oppression extends into a plea for a better world. The deep sense of resentment her account of reading elicits about the loss of control experienced by the romance reader argues poignantly for the rules she continues to discuss, but it does so in conflict with them. It is, after all, the breaking of a cardinal rule of romance—heroines not being allowed to pine after men who do not deserve them—that makes her refuse Amadis. While her discussion argues for justice, her specific example suggests that that justice is not always followed in romances. Romance as a mode, for Stanley, then, is

different than romance, the book. The romance mode is an expectation for social justice. The slippery switch her letter enacts between Amadis and Oriana and the male and female in question superimposes that expectation on society in a way that refuses disagreement.

This switch also reproduces the slippery boundary between reader and writer. Stanley is a reader, but the authority she accepts in this situation is much closer to a writer. She authors the story of Amadis and Oriana, for example, without ever having read the novel. She can do this because she has been a reader extensively. She knows the conventions. And the conventions give her a sense of right and wrong with which she may critique the affair under discussion. But her careful critique of the event does not seem designed for the major players, but for those around them—author and reader—society. Perhaps this is because in her comparison, the female in question is always just Oriana; the male, just Amadis, in spite of their actions. However, it is also because she attacks it from the perspective of a reader. When she says "might he not be permitted to hope," for instance, she is reproducing the limited view but hopeful expectation of the romance reader. The comment seems a negotiation with a writer, pleading him or her to follow the rules, but it also is a negotiation with a reader, to expect or allow it. Ultimately, the romance mode allows her to travel between two positions, writer and reader, in order to address all aspects of society with its ambiguous and underground forms of control.

Finally, after assuming the simultaneous roles of romance writer and reader, she relinquishes control when she concludes that "we must make large allowance for the difference in Cupids arithmetic in those times & the present." She is not, like the rest of

the eighteenth century, dismissing romance because of its inability to reproduce the probability of real life. She is, instead, longing for the golden age of romance and the system of justice it promises. She also, arguably, longs for the autonomy and imaginative play romance has just lent her to fix the world and its books.

However desirable romance may have seemed to Stanley, it is understandable that Elizabeth Montagu considered romance and its contemporary stepchild, the novel, unnatural. Speaking of de Solis' *The Conquest of Mexico*, for instance, Montagu says "I admire his judgment in avoiding every thing that might give an air of Romance to his history, it was no easy task in a Country where natural objects & manners differ so much from our own, to keep on the right side of the marvellous." Montagu clearly feels that romance and history should be separated. In her comment, she aligns history with those "natural objects & manners," and romance with "the marvellous." A reversal of this demonstrates Montagu's perspective that romance is not natural. Romance and the novel allow Montagu and her female contemporaries to define themselves as Bluestockings by adopting and exploding the positions the literary forms make available. However, in the process, romance represents all that their lives do not: freedom and movement.

In contrast, Shakespeare represents, for Montagu, what is recognizable in her sphere of experience: character. Shakespeare is the "universal judge of all human sentiments & situations."[130] He is used as such in her letters often, to comment on people, both those in the public eye and others with a more intimate connection to those in Montagu's circle. "The last of the –ienes has just left us," writes Sarah Scott, for instance. She adds: "some people are born great, others acquire greatness as Malvolio says, this

[130] E. Montagu to Sir George Lyttelton. Oct. 29, 1761, Batheaston, Somerset. MO 1412.

Lord must be of the first sort. I never saw such a fag end of a great family."[131]

Shakespeare, or rather, Malvolio, becomes the source of wisdom about this particular individual. In another example, Montagu writes,

> For the modes of singularity may give a man an air of contempt of the World, and of a desire to live alone. I know these sort of people rather design their peculiarities should be a badge of distinction than a line of separation between them and Society, and a man in one station of life may grow ungarter'd, or cross garter'd, who in another would have been ambitious of a blue garter from the same principle, nor is their instalment in a particular character a matter of little toil.[132]

It seems obvious here that a character in a play would be used to describe a person who is trying to shape himself as a character, but once we recognize the source as Malvolio, that buffoon from *Twelfth Night, or What You Will* who tried to shape himself into the character described in the mysterious letters he received, the reference becomes multi-layered. Not only do the people she is describing appear particularly insubstantial and foolish, Shakespeare's understanding of character appears rich and complex enough to capture humans who resemble dramatic characters.

As the "universal judge" of these and other characters, Shakespeare is natural rather than artificial. Montagu, for instance, seems invested in casting him as a judge of human character rather than an artist or creator. This is clear in an interesting passage written to her sister commenting about parliament: "there were many speeches made . . . which were talked of in all the drawing rooms in Town with the same cool spirit of criticism you would hear the speeches in a new play of Mr Whiteheads & Garrick & Mrs Gibbons manner of speaking when examined in short this Worlds a stage, & all men

[131] Sarah Scott to E. Montagu, Aug. 19, 1747, Tunbridge Wells.
[132] E. Montagu to Benjamin Stillingfleet, Aug. 18, 1757. MO 5107.

merely players."[133] In describing a group of statesmen who like to be on display, Montagu resorts to the most obvious analogy: the stage. It is interesting, then, that the specific dramatic reference is to a play by "Mr Whitehead," and to the rhetorical style of "Garrick & Mrs Gibbons." This is particularly surprising when followed by an unattributed philosophical observation about universal human character that is borrowed from another playwright—Shakespeare. Mr. Whitehead, then, is the creator or artisan in this instance. He is producing what parliamentarians are imitating. Shakespeare, on the other hand, owns the insight into human nature. This helps locate Shakespeare in a hierarchy of creation. The artists create something artificial and are consciously imitated. These imitations are recognizable because of their artificiality, their stylized nature, but Shakespeare, because true and natural, is unintentionally imitated by the lives of men, and only the insightful observer can see the connections.

A telling passage helps to further characterize Shakespeare as natural. In a letter about the history of England that contrasts with the earlier passage about de Solis, Montagu tells Elizabeth Carter:

> I do not know any history more horrible than the latter end of Henry the 6th, & the first part of Edwd ye 4ths reign. . . . as it is told in some histories that it rain'd blood till the light of the sun was obscured, so the true light of history is obscured by the frequent effusions of blood, . . . the historian has not time to comment on the bloody business of every day. Therefore indeed I do not wonder few people know any thing of the English history but what they learn from Shakespear; for our story is rather a litany of personal adventures & catastrophes than a series of political events.[134]

In de Solis' case, he is praised for keeping romance out of history. In this case, while Montagu implies that history would be best, she is not opposed to the use of Shakespeare

[133] E. Montagu to Sarah Scott, Nov. 26, 1755, London, England. MO 5748.
[134] E. Montagu to Elizabeth Carter, July 16, 1762, Hillstreet, London. MO 3079.

for history. In fact, she suggests that Shakespeare's plays are a more natural representation of English history than, potentially, history itself. She links English history to Shakespeare, suggesting they are both personal rather than political. Her word choice is instructive. Shakespeare and English history form litanies, a more intimate kind of chronology than "series," and are made up of adventures, the personal, informal version of "events." As kin to English history, Shakespeare is natural—not accurate, perhaps, nor academic, but natural because similar.

Montagu's use of Shakespeare in her letters illustrates this different status assigned to the British bard. In her letters from 1747-1762, Montagu alludes to many different writers. Pope is a favorite, as is Milton. Both seem to surface especially in discussions with intellectuals. They are, most often, self-conscious references, often attributed, but more often unattributed but underlined to point out the borrowing. She also frequently peppers her letters with classical references—increasingly so as her friendship with Carter develops. Again, these references are overt. While she rarely underlines them, she almost always attributes them. In fact, in most cases, the attribution seems to be the point. These classical references are part of her attempt to rise to the status of the classical scholar with whom she corresponds and to serve as tissue in the bond between them. Her use of Shakespeare is different, however. She does refer to him self-consciously from time to time as she does the others, and she certainly expects her readers to recognize the borrowed language and phrases, as in the earlier passage: "this Worlds a stage, & all the men merely players." However, Shakespeare is used unceremoniously in her letters more than any other literary references. She borrows his language, often without any indication she is using anyone's words but her own. "I threw

off the mortal coil," she tells a correspondent, for example, plucking words from *Hamlet* and intertwining them with her own. If there is any literary corollary to Shakespeare in these instances, it is the bible. A good example of this is several letters she wrote to Sarah during and after the failure of her marriage. In December, 1752, Montagu writes:

> All sorts of people seem much discontented at the changes at [Leicester] house, . . . Those people possess power the longest who wear it unseen. Madame Maintenon . . . understood this . . . perfectly well. . . . great is truth & it will prevail, you will see shortly that he & you will have justice done you, with this difference, that to you it will be a guardian angel to him an avenging Minister in the meantime leave him to Heaven & the thorns that prick his bosom as sayd good Mr Hamlet . . . other sorrows may endure for a night but joy & truth cometh in the morning, day light will break in & the dark knave become a most exposed villain."[135]

In an attempt to comfort her sister, Montagu starts off with an observation and a reference to a text: Madame Maintenon's letters. Interestingly, though, Maintenon is not the source of the observation, which is that "those people possess power the longest who wear it unseen." Instead, she simply understood it. She is an astute, second-hand observer. Shakespeare, however, is the source or the fountain of wisdom, as is seen in the next reference, where words simply issue forth from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. As they do so, Montagu actually shifts from Hamlet's—or rather the ghost's—words: "the thorns that prick his bosom"; to the bible: "sorrows may endure for a night but joy . . . cometh in the morning"; back to Shakespeare: "the dark knave become a most exposed villain." But she makes no distinction between the two sources, even intertwining the two: the joy (and, presumably, light) that comes in the bible's morning exposes Shakespeare's dark knave. Shakespeare, then, joins with the bible in becoming a manual for healing and a source of balm for the distressed. A little over one month later, Montagu writes again using the same source:

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[135] E. Montagu to S. Scott, Dec. 29, 1752, Sandleford. MO 5726.

> I am very sorry to find the payment is stopp'd, something must be done. If it pleases God ever to give me the means I have reason to expect I will see these odds all even, . . . but something says to me as the Ghost to Hamlet, if you have nature in you bear it not, & I will revenge thy foul & most unnatural m---ge with that foul unnatural animal, but I will not hurt him with his weapons of lying & falsehood, he shall have truth armed like the porcupine.[136]

This time, Montagu inserts herself in the story. She is the biblical "avenging Minister" of the previous letter, and the Shakespearean Hamlet, ready to right her sister's wrongs. She continues to blend the two sources, moving from Hamlet's father's ghost "if you have nature in you bear it not," and "I will revenge thy foul & most unnatural [murder]" to the bible's "I will not hurt him with his weapons of lying & falsehood, he shall have truth armed" and back to Hamlet's porcupine. Again, Shakespeare is so tied up with the bible that it almost achieves the status of scripture and truth. Its nearness to the bible in function illustrates Shakespeare's place in Montagu's hierarchy of texts and authors. Far removed from the artificial artistry of the novel distinguished, even, from classical sources and the academic English canon, Shakespeare takes his place close to the bible as a judge of and antidote for the human experience.

However, Shakespeare's place is also defined by its relationship to the novel and its literary parent. While romance is synonymous with the mechanical workings of plot, Shakespeare's territory is the human. In that earlier passage, for instance, where Montagu narrates her adventure with the broken carriage, she writes "but having none of this Divine machinery with which Poets accommodate Heroes & Heroines, . . . we were compell'd to implore the assistance of meer mortals"; this account nicely delivers

[136] E. Montagu to S. Scott, Feb. 6, 1753, London. MO 5731.

Shakespeare's "meer mortals," as the foil for romance's "Divine machinery." [137] Instead of being affiliated with the fantastical, Shakespeare delves in the real. He is not connected to mechanical plots, but associated with the humans of which the women's adventure consisted. Shakespeare is natural in part because of this particular territory. He is character/person/human, therefore real as opposed to the plot/movement/action which is unreal and serves as the opposite of the women's lived experience. As the inhabitant of the human arena, Shakespeare mediates at the boundary between life and text. This is particularly significant for Montagu, whose companions are literary and spout literature in their everyday conversation. In a letter that seems to comment on this boundary and her own allusive style, Montagu begins by discussing the possibility of exchanging her friends' company for a solitary text by the fireplace. She says, "not the best oration of Demosthenes . . . would make amends to me for the loss of my Lord Baths company or Lucians dialogues stand in the place of Monseys stories. There are some living genius's of my acquaintance whom I read, & some dead authors whom I love."[138] Her language here crosses the boundary between the two pursuits. She loves authors and reads her friends. She then proceeds to identify that boundary as the location of all good literature. "There is requisite a certain degree of goodness & benevolence in a character however great or ingenious to make us feel a kind of interest without which every thing appears faint & languid. Where affection is united with admiration, & esteem with delight, there the heart & head are pleased & contented & one feels a joy books cannot communicate." While this is presumably her literary theory (she does, after all, refer to characters), she

[137] E. Montagu to Margaret (Harley) Cavendish, Duchess of Portland, Aug. 23, 1747, Sandleford, Herefordshire. Parts of this letter published in Climenson, ed., *Elizabeth Montagu, the Queen of the Bluestockings,* 1:245-46.
[138] E. Montagu to E. Carter. Oct. 15, 1761, Sandleford, Berkshire, MO 3057.

concludes with an uneasy assessment that books do not communicate it. She seems, instead, to be locating the power of literature with characters—something that both her living friends can provide as well as the best fictional characters. Although she does not mention him specifically here, her use of him elsewhere would argue that Shakespeare is one of those "dead authors whom [she] loves." As the "universal judge of all human sentiments and situations," he seems to be located in her letters right at the boundaries between human experience and literature.

This is the place Shakespeare inhabits even more clearly in Montagu's *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare*. She says of him there, "Shakspeare seems to have had the art of the Dervise, in the Arabian Tales, who could throw his soul into the body of another man, and be at once possessed of his sentiments, adopt his passions, and rise to all the functions and feelings of his situation."[139] We see Shakespeare here as the master judge of all human passion and experience, but everything about the comparison is eerie. Shakespeare, while a dead author, is seen acting here. These are not his words that are doing things, but the man himself. In other words, he is alive. Significantly, what Shakespeare does requires yet another literary allusion, this one significantly not classical and not British. The use of this allusion implies Shakespeare's ahistorical presence and relevance for both the Western and Eastern worlds. More significantly, however, by using an allusion from an Eastern text, Montagu is suggesting Shakespeare can do something for which there is no precedent in the Western world. He can imbue life into characters. Montagu borrows on the exotic status of her comparison text, *One Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, to emphasize not just the bard's expertise—the human arena—but also his position closer to the living rather than the textual arena. This allusion does

[139] Elizabeth Montagu, *Essay on the Writings and Genius of Shakespeare,* 15.

not lend traditional academic or literary credibility, but rather locates the bard's capacity to make real people breathe on stage in the natural, primal world. Ironically, then, a fantastical literary reference assigns Shakespeare his status as natural.

Montagu's assessment of Shakespeare as natural, ironically, accounts for her argument about his praeternatural beings. As one of the elements of Shakespeare's plays that would work against her characterization of the bard as natural with an Enlightenment audience, Montagu attacks the fantastical elements, working to recuperate them, also, as natural. She does this by aligning them, as she did Shakespeare in her letters, with a British supernatural history or a British history of believing in the supernatural. Through a resemblance to British superstitious belief, Shakespeare's fantastical elements are reassessed as natural because reflecting what his audience believed. His use of the supernatural, then, like her allusion to the whirling dervise, is a demonstration of Shakespeare's ability to get inside people's heads and understand innately what makes them tic.

This incorporation of British mystical history illustrates what Montagu must see in him. As Smith points out, he "mixed together high and low language styles, high and low characters, great heroic deeds and everyday events, powerful and witty women and men."[140] The praeternatural beings likewise extend his range, like the British island, from the rural superstitions of the Irish and Scotch to the mainstream beliefs of the civilized center of English society. By using the ghosts and witches of his plays he employs rural superstitions, but by using them to match his audience's beliefs, he is employing the logic of civilized society. Shakespeare blends the extremes, creating a natural because

[140] Smith, "Elizabeth Montagu's Study," 186.

inclusive literary landscape. He is the golden mean, therefore more natural than Britain's European equivalents.

This is what Montagu sees in Shakespeare: someone bearing the same markings as woman: opposed to movement, but fully versed in humanity. Both ideologically fill a middling, therefore natural, position between extremes of society.[141] This is why Montagu's identification with Shakespeare is different than her identification with and use of the novel and romance. While the other texts allowed her gendered positions to play with, her identification with the playwright is complete and full—embodied and figured as a person, rather than a text. He presents enough similarities with woman as Montagu envisions her that she sees their relationship as organic.

Significantly, writing about Shakespeare as she did in 1769 allowed Montagu to realize to some degree woman's centrality to Britain via the national poet. By taking advantage of the fervor over Shakespeare prevalent at the time and defending him against a French critic, Montagu was not just elevating Shakespeare, but woman in the same gesture. She was strengthening woman's position in British letters by taking a mediating position between Voltaire (France) and the male critics of the British nation. This mediating position is what Eger refers to as "a shrewd adherence to a feminine model of literary decorum" that disbanded with male models of criticism and suggested Shakespeare is great because of his investment in feminine virtues, particularly sympathy, character, and moral philosophy.[142] Not only did this connection between the

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[141] In addition to the other ways I have argued women serve as the mean, Tania Smith connects Shakespeare's literary mean with Montagu's rhetorical style, which she characterizes as balancing both sides of multiple paradigms such as public and private and masculine and feminine.

[142] Elizabeth Eger, "'Out rushed a female to protect the Bard': The Bluestocking Defense of Shakespeare," in *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, eds. Nicole Pohl and Betty Schellenberg (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 2003), 127-51.

feminine and Shakespeare justify the Bard, it also justified woman's perspective. Additionally, the Bard allowed Montagu (and, by implication, woman) to participate centrally in Garrick's Year of Jubilee, that nationwide celebration of Shakespeare *as* an incarnation of Britain. Her book on Shakespeare was puffed by Garrick at the celebration, providing a physical corollary to her literary dream of woman helping Britain to greatness through her alliance with the British poet.[143]

Perhaps the organic connection Montagu saw between Shakespeare and the feminine is the reason Shakespeare grew in popularity among the female population in the eighteenth century. Certainly, the Shakespeare Ladies Club felt that Shakespeare had particular resonance with the female experience. In her play *Don Sancho*: *or The Student's Whim*, for instance, Elizabeth Boyd, a member of Shakespeare's Ladies Club, writes "Ladies your Aid, or we shant win a Heart;/Be Just, be Kind, theres Mercy in those Eyes,/. . . And once again let Shakespear bless the Stage;/Soul-Soothing Shade, rouz'd by a Woman's Pen,/To Check the impious Rage of lawless Men."[144] Here woman has an innate kindness and mercy that serves as a conduit to Shakespeare's essence. Linked together this way, women and Shakespeare can help control the extreme passions of men. As this shows, crafting a likeness between themselves and the national bard was another way for women to imagine their centrality to the British public sphere. As Britain, and its literary embodiment, Shakespeare, woman is naturally placed in the middle of all positions, gifted with the visionary insight into people and their needs, and the ability to blend, bind, and harmonize.

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[143] This is recounted by Michael Dobson, *The Making of a National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation and Authorship, 1660-1769* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).
[144] Elizabeth Boyd, *Don Sancho*: or, *The students whim . . . with Minerva's triumph, a masque* (London, 1739). Quoted and discussed in Michael Dobson, *The Making of a National Poet*, 152.

SARAH SCOTT AND *MILLENIUM HALL*

Sarah Scott's *A Description of Millenium Hall and the Country Adjacent* (1762) has long been recognized as a feminotopia, and as such is perhaps the most obvious example of an eighteenth-century female writer's attempt to imagine female empowerment through a female society. However, the utopian form has led critics to focus on the text's critique of society, and they have therefore frequently concluded that her utopia is conservative and even disappointing. However, while traditional utopias innovated against the backdrop of society, the conventions established for the utopia by the eighteenth century gave Scott a conventional space—a genre—against which to innovate. I argue that she combines this textual space with romance strategies in order to encourage a reform of British reading practices. In *Millenium Hall,* she creates a new kind of utopia embodied by woman rather than text. In so doing, she reclaims character from that gendered and vilified form—romance—as the hope of Britain, and tutors Britain in how to read behavior rather than plot. This behavior, rather than a structure, provides the model of reform Scott is after.

I argue that her textual hybridity reflects Sarah Scott's position, which is aligned with that of the other women in this study. Instead of presenting us with a separatist society that "emancipates women from patriarchal oppression and sexual exploitation," Scott sees the realization of a female arcadia as jeopardizing women's concerns that can

only be safeguarded by preserving woman's role within the public sphere.[145] More importantly, she sees woman as essential to the functioning of a better Britain. Romance helps her replace utopian models with this exemplary behavior, while simultaneously producing reflections on character and genre. Her romance and utopia hybrid text replicates the nature of her alternative solution to the social order. Hers is a compromise with the existent world, crafted out of the material available to her. However, by presenting exemplary women as the solution to the social order, Scott's text is hardly disappointing. Her proto-feminism manifests itself in her belief that woman has something to offer society. She gives woman a broad space for the exercise of her virtue and dreams of her vast influence.

I begin by demonstrating Scott's use of romance in *Millenium Hall* as a conscious choice against realism. Scott uses romance as a tool to argue for a higher order of behavior. However, she shows that this higher behavior comes from an understanding of story. I show how Scott's characters exemplify an understanding of the role of character within story, reinscripting narrative as driven by logic rather than imagination. Next, I show how the utopia of Scott's text corrects misreadings of romance, unmasking characters hidden by plot-based interpretations of romance. Finally, I show how Scott reclaims her utopian society as romance in order to critique utopia and dispel genre, characterizing it as a structure that imposes someone's will on others.

First, however, because it is seldom read, I will provide a brief summary of Scott's text. The male narrator of *Millenium Hall,* a businessman recently returned to England from Jamaica, begins his story when his carriage breaks down in Cornwall on a journey necessitated by his ill health. He and his companion Lamont explore the

[145] Nicole Pohl, "Utopianism after More," 69.

surrounding area while waiting for help and discover the grounds of Millenium Hall. When a storm hits, they are invited inside by the housekeeper who introduces them to the ladies of the house. One of the ladies, Mrs. Maynard, turns out to be the narrator's near relation. The men stay and Mrs. Maynard becomes the two men's guide, introducing them to the different aspects of the estate and relating the stories of the female founders. They learn from her that Millenium Hall was originally the idea of Miss Mancel and Mrs. Morgan who were friends at boarding school, but whose separate histories took them different places before they were able to reunite and found this society. Miss Mancel was the ward of a Mr. Hintman who treated her generously and then tried to seduce her once she was of age. His sudden death released her from his designs. Mrs. Morgan, once Miss Melvyn, was sent to boarding school by a father and a designing step-mother. Later, she was married to Mr. Morgan, whom she did not love and whose sister tyrannized over her. After the death of Mr. Morgan, Mrs. Morgan, and Miss Mancel combined their resources and formed Millenium Hall. At this estate, they were joined by Lady Mary Jones, who had been raised by a dissolute woman but reformed through the help of Miss Selvyn. They were also joined by Miss Selvyn, Miss Trentham, and Mrs. Maynard. As their visit concludes, the male narrator notes that his traveling companion, Lamont, has been reformed by the examples of the women with whom they have interacted. He is found reading the bible, to which their examples have guided him.

Millenium Hall bears the markings of a utopia. It provides us with "a traditional utopian framework," in which Sir George Ellison "enacts the role of the utopian traveler."[146] Ellison, a traveler through England, discovers and describes a new society with zeal to his fellow countrymen. His narration implicitly compares the new society

[146] Rees, *Utopian Imagination*, 216.

with the home country, suggesting that the new or foreign is the antidote to all that is wrong with the old. In so doing, it casts hope for the future as its central motif—that founding and most recognizable characteristic of the utopia. Additionally, Scott's text at least provides the impression, in the title and through the book's structure, that the plot consists primarily of "Description," as most utopias do. These markers lead the reader to experience the book as a utopia, a set of presuppositions which may be fulfilled or denied.

However, the book is also a romance. The most glaring example of its debt to the romance tradition is the histories that Mrs. Maynard tells the narrator and that Vincent Carretta identifies as "the rècit, or narrative interpolations of characters' autobiographies, a narrative device associated with the improbable plots of romances." [147] Not only do these histories deliver improbable plots similar to romance, they also create an interleaving pattern characteristic of romance where one character shows up in another character's story and their histories become woven together. Linda Dunne argues, additionally, that the women featured in these rècits are romance heroines because of their virtuous nature. She suggests that the novel's utopia delivers its female founders from their previous status as romance heroines.

However, *Millenium Hall*'s debt to romance is one to which much scholarship has been blind. In spite of these romance "finds," for instance, Christine Rees calls Scott's text a utopia blended with "the novel of formal realism."[148] In so doing, Rees is participating in the "singularly resistant" story of the rise of novel, but so are Dunne and

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[147] Vincent Carretta, "Utopia Limited: Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* and *The History of Sir George Ellison*," *The Age of Johnson: A Scholarly Annual* 5 (1992). 323. Linda Dunne. "Mothers and Monsters in Sarah Robinson Scott's Millenium Hall," in *Utopian and Science Fiction by Women: Worlds of Difference,* eds., Jane L. Donawerth and Carol A. Kolmerten (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994), 54-72.
[148] Rees, *Utopian Imagination*, 216.

Carretta.[149] This story encourages textual hierarchies so that, both in the eighteenth century and since, "developments in fiction are measured as 'healthy' when they contribute to the 'birth' of the novel."[150] Rees sees romance as unrealistic and improbable, therefore the foil of the novel. She, therefore, reproduces the hierarchy between the novel and romance: *Millenium Hall* is rare and remarkable (read healthy) because it is realistic. Carretta also sees romance as an unhealthy genre, calling it "improbable." He recovers *Millenium Hall* from its descent into romance by partnering it with Scott's next novel, *Sir George Ellison*, which he says is organized as a "narrative structure associated with tales of truth like biography and history."[151] Dunne, while not pausing to make a distinction between romance and the novel, still reads the utopia as the salvation of romance.[152] In spite of this hierarchy and its deployment by critics throughout time, Barbara Fuchs argues, "the categories [novel and romance] turn out to be remarkably flexible, to the point that part of what determines the characterization of a given text is its a priori valuation by critics."[153] As Fuchs indicates, most eighteenth-century novels cannot solely be novels without relying in some way on romance. A clear example of this is the novel *The History of Sir George Ellison* that Carretta holds up as the pattern of "truth." It, like *Millenium Hall*, has romance tropes in it. For instance, the character Miss Almon is asked for her history by Ellison and delivers a rècit, just like

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[149] Fuchs, *Romance,* 105.
[150] Fuchs, *Romance*, 104.
[151] Carretta, "Utopia Limited," 323.
[152] In addition to these writers, Alessa Johns, "Remembering the Future: Eighteenth-Century Female Utopian Writing," in *Genres as Repositories of Cultural Memory*, eds., Hendrik van Gorp and Ulla Musarra-Schroeder (Amsterdam, Netherlands: Rodopi, 2000), 37-49, argues that eighteenth-century female utopias modify prevalent romance (and domestic) genres in order to articulate longings for happier social, economic and political arrangements. However, in a discussion of *MH*, "Realizing Fiction: Sarah Scott's Utopian Biography." *Vite di Utopia*, ed., Paola Spinozzi (Ravenna, Italy: Longo, 2000), 199-207, she accounts for it as "realistic," caching in on the development of the novel as a kind of credit with her readers.
[153] Fuchs, *Romance*, 105.

those of the women in *Millenium Hall*. Her story is characterized by flawless virtue despite her sufferings at the hands of her father and his cunning mistress.[154] The presence of romance elements in *The History of Sir George Ellison* suggests that Carretta's reading of that book as biography and history rather than romance comes simply from his determination to do so. Similar readings of *Millenium Hall* that elide and devalue romance blind us to what the text achieves.

I argue that not only does *Millenium Hall* participate in the blending of romance and novel to which all eighteenth-century fiction is subject, it deploys romance as a conscious choice against realism. This lack of realism can best be seen in the female characters about whom the rècits are told. These female characters are unrealistically perfect. Miss Mancel, for example, is raised an orphan and finds herself a prey to the desires of her male guardian. Later, she is thrust from the bosom of her one true friend, then must deny herself the attentions of the one man she loves because of the disapproval of his grandmother. Throughout all of this, she remains innocent, pure, and exemplary, always making the right decision, consulting the right advisors. Likewise, Miss Melvyn suffers from the schemes of, first, a step-mother, then a tyrannical husband and his spinster sister. She is always obedient to their authority, refuses to speak ill of any of these persons, doing her utmost to make them appear good to the world and keeping her pain private. The others follow suit. Lady Emilia, another example of romance heroism, sleeps with her fiancé before they marry and winds up pregnant. While this is a mistake, it is an excusable mistake from an outside perspective. They were already honorably engaged, the man was still willing to marry her, and it happened because her father

[154] Sarah Scott, *The History of Sir George Ellison*, ed., Betty Rizzo (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 154-163.

forced them to delay their wedding, but for Lady Emilia, it is inexcusable. She refuses the intended marriage because of her error, gives up her child and lives the rest of her life in chaste celibacy, continually paying penance for her one failing. This is the kind of heroism Northrop Frye associates with romance, citing Aristotle's character classifications "which may be greater than ours, less, or roughly the same."[155] The romance hero (and presumably heroine) is superior to the common race of men, though still human. The virtue at which Lady Emilia and the romance heroines of *Millenium Hall* excel is unrealistic. Lady Emilia's decisions do not make sense in the novel of formal realism. Her story, at best, looks strange from the perspective of realistic fiction, but her choice is central both to romance and to the moral hierarchy of *Millenium Hall*. By choosing to forego her plans for her own future happiness, Lady Emilia demonstrates constancy, the predominant value of romance. Here, her constancy is not to a lover as it most often is in romance, but to her principles. Lady Emilia fixes her error by being absolutely static and constant the rest of her life. Scott is not presenting us with recognizable human characters with whom to identify. Instead, she uses romance heroines to argue for a higher, idealistic order of behavior.

This higher order of virtuous behavior is part of romance's idealism—an element of romance that echoes the societal idealism of utopia. Romance is a form of wish-fulfillment, a "site where . . . residual values [not found in society] go to live out their half-lives as nostalgic dreams."[156] By providing us with these ideal models of behavior via romance, Scott is performing the same readerly desire Arabella elicits during her conversation with the "worthy divine" who comes to reclaim her from romances. In an

[155] Frye, *The Anatomy of Criticism,* 33. Fuchs, *Romance*, 5.
[156] Scott Black. "Romance Redidivus." *The Cambridge History of the English Novel,* eds., Robert L. Caserio and Clement Hawes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

attempt to prove romances are not true to life, the doctor points out the distinction in behavior between characters in her books and those he knows from real life. Arabella's response twists the doctor's observation into a critique of humanity: "'I am afraid,'" she says, "'that the difference is not in favour of the present world,'" but the doctor is determined not to let romance come out on top.[157] He elides her claim that romances provide a better race of humans than real life with a different one: that they inspire "the passions of revenge and love."[158] While she eventually cedes this argument to him, he misses the evidence she provides against his argument via her example. Throughout their conversation, she—who has been shaped by romance—is magnanimous, inviting his censure, making clear her willingness to rectify any wrongs to which she is guilty. When he traps her in an "absurdity," she offers no "subterfuge or excuse," and she meekly accepts his pronouncements.[159] At the same time, she demonstrates her knowledge of argumentation and her capacity for rational thought—mounting striking opposition to his argument that the books fire up the passions. The divine himself acknowledges both her integrity and her "uncommon firmness of mind," but he fails to connect those characteristics to the shaping influence of romance.[160] After the doctor is finished with her, Arabella resigns her claims about the "better class of beings" in the texts as well as her attempt to emulate them.[161] In the final chapter, she gives herself to Mr. Glanville, with an acknowledgement of "all my remaining imperfections" (one can hear a brokenness in this disclaimer), and declares her intention to replace romance as a model

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[157] Charlotte Lennox, *The Female Quixote: The Adventures of Arabella* (London, Boston and Henley, England: Pandora Press, 1986), 420.
[158] Lennox, *The Female Quixote*, 420.
[159] Ibid., 419.
[160] Ibid., 417, 408.
[161] Ibid., 420.

of behavior with her husband: "since I am so happy as to be desired for a partner for life by a man of your sense and honour, I will endeavor to make myself as worthy as I am able to such a favourable distinction."[162] While she acted the part of romance heroine, Arabella believed in her own virtuousness and acted accordingly. In the process of relinquishing romances and their dream of virtuousness, however, Arabella is forced to come face-to-face with her own imperfections. She chooses, instead, her new husband's affection as her alternate guide for behavior, but she holds very little hope for her own perfection.

Like Arabella, Scott's heroines serve equally as models for exemplary behavior. Not only do they preserve constancy as an important virtue, they attend to duty (another romance concern) and kindness. They return generosity to those who mistreat them. Their actions are productive of social harmony, but their interest in harmony extends far beyond society. They require a harmony of their own inward and outward experience. With the exception of Lady Emilia, Lady Mary Jones is the only romance heroine in *Millenium Hall* to exhibit flaws. This is easily excused by the fact that she did not receive a proper education early on. Yet, she is still morally superior to the common woman and therefore qualified to be a heroine because she recognizes the absence of and seeks out her own education.

However, Scott is invested in teaching heroism rather than simply modeling it. Lady Mary Jones' backstory allows her to demonstrate how a heroine is made and what heroism consists of. Lady Mary's history suggests, as does *Millenium Hall*, that a heroine's education consists of an in-depth understanding of chronology. Lady Sheerness, who serves as the faulty source of Lady Mary's education, is described as living a "life

[162] Ibid., 423.

passed in an uninterrupted succession of engagements, without reflection on the past or consideration on the future consequences" (173).[163] Mrs. Maynard, the narrator of this tale, seems to be suggesting the past and the future should serve as appropriate inhibitors for Lady Sheerness's "unbridled imagination" (172). This uncontained imagination shaped Lady Mary into a person for whom "an adventure was the supreme pleasure of life and these pretty flights gave marriage all the charms of romance" (176). Lady Mary's problem, inherited from Lady Sheerness, as this description indicates, is lack of attention to anything but the present. That produces a life characterized by an endless succession of adventures, and very little progression. However, Lady Mary learns from a young female in her circle (who turns out to be Miss Selvyn). Miss Selvyn first teaches her about chronology. Mrs. Maynard says that Lady Mary

> was a good deal startled one day by a lively, but amiable and modest young lady who said she believed no man that was not an absolute fool, or at the time intoxicated, ever insulted a woman with improper behavior or discourse, if he had not from some impropriety in her conduct seen reason to imagine it would not be ill received. (183)

By applying this counsel not delivered as counsel, Lady Mary is capable of intuiting the course of events in her own life. She could see suddenly that Lord Robert's improper advances were not the first event in her story, but that it must have been preceded by one or more events demonstrating her own propensity for advances. Her instruction about story chronology from Miss Selvyn continues when she seeks out her advice. This advice consists of continuing the narrative Lady Mary has just begun to piece together:

> 'I allow,' said [Miss Selvyn], 'that by depriving him of his hopes, you may put an end to his addresses; but consider, my dear Lady Mary, what satisfaction they can afford you if they are only the result of a fondness for your person which would lose all its charms for him as soon as it became

[163] All references to *Millenium Hall* are to the Broadview edition: Sarah Scott, *A Description of Millenium Hall and the Country Adjacent,* ed., Gary Kelly (Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press, 1995).

> familiarized by possession. You would then at once find yourself both neglected and despised by the man for whose sake you had rendered yourself truly despicable. (185)

"Depriving him of his hopes," she says (the next event in the story chain) may end in turning him away (the next event) or, by implication, turn into a romance based in rational friendship. Giving into him, however (the other potential next event), will end in the loss of his passion (next event), which would then result in neglect (next event), which would then end, she implies, with a reduction in self-respect (final event). What she is really teaching her is the logic of story, cause and effect. However, the primary message of this logic is that she herself was the inaugurating actor and the next events also depend on her. In the grammar of cause and effect, it turns out, she is a major player. This is an important reading of plot. Miss Selvyn's instruction essentially demystifies romance. It suggests that rather than being a victim of divine mechanics and cosmic renderings of adventures or even of male aggression, a heroine can simply be her own monitor of events. While she cannot control all the pieces—how Lord Robert responds to her, for instance—she does have a measure of authority over her own story. Lady Mary applies this advice and becomes, as the narrator indicates, "steady in her conduct," achieving that standard of constancy evinced in Lady Emilia's story (186). In the process, she is ultimately able to access Lord Robert's esteem, proving the truth of Miss Selvyn's instruction: that she has some control.

What Miss Selvyn is really teaching Lady Mary is a different kind of plot driven by character or behavior. Instead of encouraging the adventures for which Lady Mary had once lived, Miss Selvyn tutors her in character-based story. How will that make me feel? she teaches her to ask. What will my actions make him feel and how will he respond? By

factoring character into a story, one can anticipate reactions and responses and therefore events. In the process, Lady Mary learns to be an unwilling participant in that other kind of story so often associated with romance: the plot-based story.

Miss Selvyn's instruction is also tutelage in the power of example—instruction that effectively extends her education to all of human existence. Not only does the instruction arrive, initially, in the form of example rather than counsel, but given the key to plot by her "amiable friend," Lady Mary is able to apply Miss Selvyn's tutelage to the examples of Lady Sheerness and Lady Brumpton. Watching their actions, she is able accurately to determine both causes and effects. She recognizes that Lady Sheerness's fair-weather friendships have been caused by pleasure rather than esteem, and that this series of events will effect decency but not sympathy. She understands that Lady Sheerness's dissipations (rather than some divine ill-will) have caused the debts that straiten her after her aunt's death, and she is "shocked" by Lady Sheerness's failure to do what she has learned: to think about the future (188). Lady Brumpton also demonstrates by bad example, "the consequences of . . . too great vanity" (192). This understanding of accountability in story allows Lady Mary to read and intuit the lives of those around her. This extends her education to the span of human experience, greatly increasing her learning.

Likewise Scott emphasizes this power of example over words in a scene from Lady Mary Jones' history that echoes *The Female Quixote*. Lady Mary is instructed by a nurse as Arabella is instructed by a doctor, but the means for that instruction varies significantly. Lady Mary has been wounded only a day before her plans to set out on an "adventure" with a young man and be secretly married to him. While recovering from her

injuries, she hears that the man is already married. As she reels from the shock of this discovery, her nurse enters the room exulting in a lucky circumstance in the life of her son and thanking God for the way things happened. Here Scott rewrites the doctor scene from *The Female Quixote* with a couple of significant revisions. For one, the person who teaches her is a woman instead of a man. Second, the female nurse instructs Lady Mary unwittingly. Instead of preaching to her, counseling her to remember God, the nurse simply talks about a personal experience she has just had where something she considered to be a tragedy turned out to be a blessing. Then, she praises God for the happy accident. Lady Mary intuits a personal lesson from listening to an account of the nurse's life. This suggests an interest in the experience of women teaching women, but more importantly, an interest in the power of example rather than instruction. It is the doctor's fondness for text (instruction by preaching rather than example), as well as his inability to read the example of Arabella that sets him apart as a poor reader.

In addition to teaching her the power of example, Lady Mary's education reforms her reading skills. The cause-and-effect logic taught her by Miss Selvyn de-romanticizes the "charms of romance" with which Lady Mary had been enamored. The concept of chronology takes the "romance," or magic, out and replaces it with logic (story logic, at some point, becomes just logic), but essentially, Lady Mary's education argues, viewing romance as a series of charms is a misreading. Lady Mary's education recuperates romance as a whole, suggesting that much of what happens has a cause behind it. Knowing what she was responsible for helps Lady Mary identify those "many calamities" and her rescues from them for which she was not accountable (191), and these turn her to God. As she tries to figure out "by what various means she had been saved so often from

ruin, she could not forbear thinking that she was indeed the care of that Being who had hitherto employed so little of her thoughts" (191). Story, then, does have an improbable number of accidents in it for which the subject is not responsible, but Lady Mary (and the text) locates the source of these as a Christian god whom she must thank for the many rescues she has experienced. This is an important reinscription of romance, as a story that intimates or encourages faith in god when read correctly. It is, after all, god, rather than the hero, who is credited for rescuing Lady Mary. This suggests that assessing romance as a series of improbable events is simply a misreading—a failure to see the logic that points to a divine source.

However, there are other sources of story as well. In fact, "The History of Miss Melvyn and Miss Mancel," suggests that women are not free to generate their own character-based stories. Both of these heroines face a long series of unkind and demeaning actions by both men and women, but the text suggests that this inappropriate behavior is the result of that same "unbridled imagination" from which Lady Sheerness suffered. The women's histories are full of minor characters of both genders whose imaginations propel the course of the protagonists' lives. Miss Melvyn's step-mother has an active imagination. It is her "*imaginary* perfections" that compel her to send Miss Melvyn away because of "an unwillingness to be seen with one whose person all her vanity could not prevent her from being sensible was more attractive than her own" (88). Mr. Morgan wants to imagine himself the most beloved by his wife; therefore, he forces the separation between her and Miss Mancel so no one can upstage him: "'I will have no person in my house more beloved than myself. When you have no other friend,' added he with a malicious smile, 'I may hope for the honour of that title'" (130). His sister

Susanna, endowed with a large inheritance, plain face, and active imagination, "*imagining* herself successively in love with each [man who wanted her money], lived in a course of disappointments" (133). While constructing a romance plotline for herself, with its improbable repetitions, Miss Morgan becomes the tyrant in Mrs. Morgan's life as a result of the disappointments she has imagined. Mr. Hintman's imaginative plotline is another imaginative rendering they experience, this time via his executor's tale—still in story form, and authored by male desire. These imaginatively rendered stories and adventures are part of those "supreme pleasure[s] of life," which Lady Mary's education has taught her not to generate nor to accede in.

Scott presents these violent imaginations that generate narrative driven by plot as a mirror of British society. That is the source of romance's "adventures." She has included the romance histories as a critique of that society. This critique is a message that, in keeping with the project of *Millenium Hall*, requires its readers to do what Lady Mary does. We must use the power of example and deduce accountability. We know that these women are perfect. They are romance heroines. They could not possibly be guilty of prior impropriety, and they would not choose to participate in these kinds of adventures. It could not be god, who has proven himself kind and good by delivering Lady Mary and her nurse from unforeseeable disasters. It must be another source, the book teaches us to intuit, and the only other players are the characters with violent imaginations who seem to make up the entire cast of characters in the romance histories. It is society, then, British society, that generates the violent accidents and adventures. In fact, as we perform such deduction, we find ourselves, with the heroines, employing logic in response to what has often been considered its opposite: imagination.

Learning story logic by example from romance hero*ines* is ironic as we consider the gendered discourse of concern about romance. Because it has been read, primarily, as plot and that improbable, it has been associated, almost conflated, with the imagination. As early as the sixteenth century, women in particular were being warned about romance because of this association. In *The Education of a Christian Woman*, for instance, Juan Luis Vives warns women of romance because of the power of its imaginative agency, especially its fantastical elements.[164] Throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, while male and female readers alike participated in the rage for French romances, women primarily received the credit for such illicit reading. Only ten years before the publication of *Millenium Hall*, Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* recast the story of Don Quixote and his textual delusion as a female problem. If we give women too much romance, ran the argument of the text, they will *become* it. At the end of Lennox's novel, Arabella, the protagonist, is "cured" of her delusion by the honorable divine. Almost a century after the publication of the novel, and in an ironic twist that highlights the enduring opinion about women and romance, a rumor circulated that Samuel Johnson, not Lennox, wrote the doctor's speech.[165] The rumor shows just how inseparable women and romance were, but also the damage that such an alliance did to the female mind. As a woman, Lennox is of course capable of writing a novel that models the romance, but must not be able to launch such a rational argument against it.

Scott's text, on the other hand, argues that only ideal women understand romance. They are the ones here who teach us to follow its logic, and as we do so, we discover the

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[164] Fuchs, *Romance,* 81.

[165] Miriam Lassiter Small, *Charlotte Ramsay Lennox* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1935), 79-81. Lassiter provides a brief history of this claim, which began in 1843, then agrees based on speculation about writing style. By 1967, however, Duncan Isles, calls this claim mere speculation. Duncan Isles. "Johnson and Charlotte Lennox." *New Rambler 19* (1967): 34-38.

imagination as its opposing force generating improbable adventures out in the world. This is perhaps driven home in an episode from Miss Melvyn's story. Mrs. Maynard says, "[Mr. Morgan] told her plainly, he admired her eloquence prodigiously, but that there was more rhetoric in her beauty than any composition of words could contain; which pleading in direct contradiction to all she had said, she must excuse him, if he was influenced by the more powerful oratory of her charms" (126). Mr. Morgan refuses reality (Miss Melvyn's plea of lack of affection for him) and chooses to believe "charms" and "beauty" can speak something exactly opposite. His response to her is clearly imaginative. He personifies her beauty, imagining it speaking to him, instead of accepting the message delivered via her mouth—the usual source of oratory. In other words, he is insisting on his own (misunderstood) version of romance, opting for fantastical manifestations over the logic that is present. His characterization of her beauty as rhetoric and oratory—words associated with a rational genre—is part of his delusion, particularly because, more than other texts, it implies an audience. The romance he is insisting on seems rational because it speaks to *him*. It also suggests the same misreading of romance that we have seen before. He clearly codes it as plot. He hears her beauty speak to him, which compels his own actions. In the process, he is unable to read her behavior or example. In fact, he tells her he "admires her eloquence prodigiously," suggesting he is only recognizing the style or features of her speech, rather than its content. If there is a rampant misreading of romance in Britain, it is because of this imaginative, self-serving drive for romance adventures that obscures the logic of the everyday and the logic of perfect women.

Scott's book implies that her readers are as daft as Mr. Morgan and the doctor of *The Female Quixote*. If we have learned from the example of her heroines, we can see their perfection. They are constant (remember Lady Emilia). They are amiable and modest, as Miss Selvyn is described. They take responsibility for their own actions, as Lady Mary learns to do. They are pure, virtuous, and devout. They are perfectly logical, and they are unwilling participants in imaginative endeavors. As such, they are, as the text implies all ideal females are, at odds with their own storyline that gets written for them by British society. But Scott does not expect us to pick this up. For Mr. Morgan and the doctor and many others, character is veiled by plot. As participants in the British public sphere, her readers would be privy to this same problematic reading of text.

This is why she constructs a utopia—to make these perfect women visible to the outside world. Much of the scholarship on *Millenium Hall* has focused on the closed nature of the society. The women have chosen a remote country estate veiled by trees. They construct barriers protecting its inhabitants from the outside world, and they have no interest in telling the world about themselves. That is Sir George Ellison's job. However, all of these private, restrictive elements of Millenium Hall are simply products of the perfections of the women. Instead, Millenium Hall, ironically, displays them to all of Britain. This is exactly what the utopia allows Scott to do. Sir George Ellison becomes their narrator, and the utopian framework allows him to sell them with zeal to the British public. He presents them as a spectacle that garners the right amount of attention, particularly because he codes them as different or other, as the utopia often does. On first viewing the landscape surrounding the society, Ellison says "we began to think ourselves in the days of Theocritus, so sweetly did the sound of a flute come wafted through the

air" (56). His initial response, then, to this society was a feeling of transportation, the impression of being somewhere besides England. This reaction imports the inaugurating convention of traditional utopias—it provides the impression of distance between this and the home country. As it does so, it suggests something other or different about this place because the impression of distance is so immediate.

However, particularly, the utopian framework draws attention to the women's perfection, their idealism. The utopia comes coded with the expectation of idealism. It promises a better world where wrongs are fixed. Placing these perfect women in a utopia, though a bit heavy-handed, encourages readers to register them as ideal. Once she has provided the right literary codes for perfection, Scott reinscribes them back into romance via their rècits, asking readers to place that idealism back into this well-known and much maligned form. Sir George Ellison even assists with this transfer in his initial and final comments on the society at Millenium Hall. His initial comment, above, transports him and his companion to Theocritus, automatically connecting them to the nostalgic past of pastoral romance. Additionally, Ellison says they had "been inclined . . . to fancy ourselves on enchanted ground" (58). He also describes the place as a "fairy land" (58), thus revising his surmise about their location from the (romantic) past to romance. The language Ellison borrows here overlays romance onto utopia. His performance is utopian. What he says serves as his heightened response to this setting, a convention of the utopia. Traditional utopias are discovered with surprise and wonder, a characteristic ploy of the utopian novel that relies on the ethos of the discoverer to help sell both the value of this new society and its degree of difference from the known world. Certainly this language helps emphasize the degree of otherness he senses in what he sees—suggesting it is other

than human. But his language is romance. In other words, while Ellison is enacting utopia, he is speaking romance. Again at the end, he takes us back to romance. He says, "All that romance ever represented in the plains of Arcadia are much inferior to the charms of Millenium Hall, except the want of shepherds be judged a deficiency that nothing else can compensate; there indeed they fall short of what romantic writers represent, and have formed a female Arcadia" (223). Both of these responses that envelop the description of Millenium Hall are designed to help us apply romance to the utopia.

The nostalgic reference to pastoral romance asks us to apply romance chronology to what would otherwise be a static description. Nostalgia automatically imports time into a genre shaped, often, in the absence of time. This nostalgia takes us to Theocritus, or the classical world, suggesting a specific place in time. The jump between the two gives us the sense that Millenium Hall is simply the restoration of something. Of course, the classical reference is not coincidental. Scott takes us to the classical world because of its associations with reason, but, significantly, she takes us specifically to the particular romance of that classical world, which again allies romance with logic rather than imagination. By applying the romance chronology this reminds us of—particularly those rècits the narration provides—we recognize that the heroines, also, were utopian before they arrived at Millenium Hall and created a new society. Millenium Hall, then, is not new. It is just a restoration of a preexisting condition.

Ellison's final comments also suggest that what they have found at Millenium Hall is, rather than a utopia, an adaptation of romance (they have taken out shepherds and added more women). In fact, *The History of Sir George Ellison* adds to the repurposing of *Millenium Hall* as adapted romance rather than utopia. Sir George Ellison's arrival at

Millenium Hall is, on first glance, part of "a traditional utopian framework," where he "enacts the role of the utopian traveler."[166] However, seen in conjunction with *Sir George Ellison*, which is "not simply a sequel; it is a prequel . . . as well," Ellison is also the epic traveler, whose narrative trajectory is slowed by his encounter with romance. [167] This is the structure traced by Barbara Fuchs in considering the tension between epic and romance in classical and medieval literary traditions. The romance—in this case Millenium Hall—serves as a "deflation of epic purpose and imperial conquest," an "alternative way to imagine relations between people," or "respite from the battlefield."[168] Ellison, "the younger son of an ancient and opulent family,"[169] is the quintessential British Odysseus, representative of his nation, whose journey from Jamaica home to his family seat is interrupted by this encounter. It finds him in need of the kind of rest from battle that such transgressive romance episodes provide. He describes himself as world weary. Ellison's battle, of course, was an economic one, where, as he says, "while I increased my fortune, I gradually impaired my constitution; and . . . dedicated all [my] application to mercantile gain" (54). Traditionally, these romance episodes posit eros as the opposing value of adventure. The female society he finds is founded on benevolence: a derivative of love, Scott would certainly argue, and the opposing value to the amassing of wealth.[170] In fact, the society consciously sets itself up as the antithesis to economic obsession in recounting where their estate had been: "the last inhabitant of this house we were informed was an old miser whose passion for

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[166] Rees, *Utopian Imagination*, 216.
[167] Carretta, "Utopia Limited," 315.
[168] Fuchs, *Romance*, 83.
[169] Scott, *The History of Sir George Ellison*, 1.
[170] Eger, "Paper Trails and Eloquent Objects," 124 calls benevolence the public face of private, rational friendship. This is just one of many adaptations of romance values that Scott employs. Eros becomes benevolence; the hero/deliverer becomes God; constancy to a lover becomes constancy to principle.

accumulating wealth reduced him into almost as unfortunate a state as Midas" (219). Millenium Hall, founded under opposite principles, provides him both with rest from such economic warfare, and with the deflation of his imperialist purposes (he is, after all, returning from Jamaica). This deflation is so successful that it is reflected in his recounting of his journey. He admits to a prior, flawed purpose, saying he had "given up the substance for the shadow," and "sacrificed the greater good in pursuit of the less" (55). In other words, he himself intimates Millenium Hall's role as erotic/benevolent episode or rest for the battle weary in his epic journey. The addition of his storyline situates *Millenium Hall* as romance, not utopia.

This is an important reassessment, particularly because the utopia has historically been characterized as a male genre. According to Nicole Pohl and Brenda Tooley, female writers of the eighteenth century did not have access to the traditional utopia because of their lack of access to land via travel and colonization.[171] However, even more anxiety over the gendered discourse of the utopia circulates around the female body—which critics claim has been co-opted by the utopia as land for man to conquer. Darby Lewes, for instance, classifies utopia as just one of many textualities that employ woman as a representation of land, being conquered and subdued the same way soil or space is.[172] Ana M. Acosta is equally gloomy about women and utopia. According to her, the surveillance and transparency of the utopia—marked features in both geographic and female utopias—are allied with the male body. She suggests this connection necessarily privileges the male over the female. Because of this alliance, the female body cannot remain intact within a utopian text; rather, women author utopian novels at the cost of

[171] Pohl and Tooley, Introduction, 1-15.
[172] Lewes, *Nudes from Nowhere*.

their femininity.[173] Such an argument necessarily conjures up Irigaray, who condemns all of male, Western literature for its tendency to write itself onto and erase the female body. Acosta's argument would suggest, with Irigaray, that females who author utopias are complicit with men in co-opting and erasing the female body.[174] Because women are land, writing a text that places women in the conqueror's position is an impossibility.

A few writers try to recover female-authored utopias from this double-bind by pointing out that their chosen landscape bears distinct similarities to the female body. Ellen Moers, for instance, suggests this is true of much literature by women, and notes that the landscape surrounding Millenium Hall, with its rolling hills, especially suggests female sexuality.[175] Perhaps this is the female author's way of attempting Irigaray's (utopian) dream of fighting male textual dominance with its own tools, but the utopian gesture of seeing and claiming that landscape is still a problematic, gendered encounter that simply makes visible, I would argue, the location and situation of male dominance.

Scott circumvents these issues by writing a romance that preexists her utopia. She simply places what was already "utopian" from a "female" genre into a male, utopian framework in order to make it visible. Utopias are visible to the world, her intertextuality suggests. People take note of them and connect them to real issues. Scott wants her audience to do the same, but she also wants to reclaim the source of their perfection as feminine. Again, this is because she is attempting a reform of British reading practices.

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[173] Anna M. Acosta, "Transparency and the Enlightenment Body: Utopian Space in Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* and Sade's *The 120 Days of Sodom*," *Gender and Utopia in the Eighteenth Century: Essays in English and French Utopian Writing*, eds., Nicole Pohl and Brenda Tooley (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 107-119.

[174] Several writers on *Millenium Hall* claim this is what happens in Scott's utopia: the women sacrifice their sexuality for change. These include Judith Broome, *Fictive Domains: Body, Landscape, and Nostalgia, 1717-1770* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 2007) and Dorice Williams Elliott, "Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* and Female Philanthropy," *SEL: Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 35, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 535-53.

[175] Ellen Moers, *Literary Women*, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 252-64.

She does not want readers to rely on description or text, but to intuit through example. Example is the territory of romance and fiction, and the only hope women have of being understood is for the British public to master an understanding of character.

It is fitting then, as well as radical, that her utopia is a person rather than a text. We can see this in the way the society dismantles itself as a utopia, leaving only the women to fill that place. For one, the society dismantles itself as a society. It is simply story—a continuation of the model women's stories. This is emphasized in several ways. For one, a version of this community (or rather existence) preexisted it in the romance histories. In "The History of Miss Melvyn and Miss Mancel," the two meet at boarding school and find such pleasant happiness together. The text says:

> Their time was so entirely engrossed by these employments [learning], that they had little leisure, and still less desire, to keep company with the rest of the school; but they saved themselves from the dislike which might naturally have arisen in the minds of the other scholars, from being thus neglected, by little presents which Miss Mancel frequently made them. (95)

What seems most significant in this description of their time together at school is how much it resembles their later endeavor, their female society. They spend their time learning and improving themselves, while bestowing gifts on those around them. In other words, Millenium Hall really began here, at school. This was the girls' choice of narrative to begin with: a rational existence spent in intellectual and philanthropic pursuits. However, because of a designing step-mother (and willing male accomplice) on one side, and a designing male guardian on the other, this story gets interrupted for the imaginative adventures and accidents British society compels them to undergo.

Additionally, the community proves itself as a continuation of story by emphasizing the passage of time. One of the problems of the utopia is its static nature.

While a traveler takes us to it and is drawn to it via his desire, the ideal society represents the fulfillment of desire, thus the end of narrative. This is what Johnson critiques in his novel *Rasselas*, where the titular character, raised in utopic Abyssinia, leaves, but not before pleading, "I have already enjoyed too much. Give me something to desire."[176] As the continued story of their lives, the novel is not a static description of a model society, but an existence that brings with it the passage of time. In fact, throughout the novel, the narration highlights this distinction between a traditional utopia and the women's lives by both borrowing from and contrasting with the storyline in the women's histories. As Scott's text jumps back and forth between the histories and the female society, it juxtaposes the action of the two. The histories provide an endless supply of adventures and plot developments. The society, on the other hand, provides a continuous stream of meals and bedtimes and mornings—each of which are mentioned and serve as interruptions to the histories. These daily markers both act like romance—they plod along by repeating the same plot devices—and oppose the action-packed plotlines of romance by replacing them with daily events.[177] The result is a sense of day-to-dayness, a sense of social order reflecting story, but also rational choices about story. This narration is an orderly romance. It is that character-based story that the heroines already were driven to author, and *Millenium Hall* is simply the realization of that kind of story, not a description of a society.

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[176] Samuel Johnson, *The History of Rasselas. Prince of Abissinia*, ed., D.J. Enright (London: Penguin, 1985), 45.

[177] The men arrive just before supper on day one, and leave in the morning of day 7. These daily meals and bedtimes are as follows. Day 1: supper and bedtime, p. 10. Day 2: morning, p. 11; breakfast, p. 14; dinner, p. 55; tea, p. 56; supper and bedtime, p. 68. Day 3: morning, p. 68; dinner, p. 102; ball, p. 108; supper, p. 109; bedtime, p. 113. Day 4: morning, p. 113; breakfast, p. 117; dinner, p. 141. tea and supper, p. 142. Day 5: morning, p. 142; breakfast, p. 144; supper, p. 169. Day 6: morning and breakfast, p. 169; rest of day, p. 194; Day 7: morning, p. 194.

Only the women themselves are left with that residual utopian value, the static, making them the utopia. Their constancy is the behavioral equivalent of the utopia's end of narrative. While the actions or activities change, the principles that guide those actions are always the same and can be relied on to be so as a reflection of their perfection. Their character signals the end of desire and is, therefore, the utopia here.

In addition to refusing the static character of utopia, the women's society also refuses association with perfection—except within the six female founders themselves. The society is far from perfect. Christine Rees usefully argues that the deformities of its inhabitants signal the imperfection of the society.[178] These deformities can be found, of course, in the monsters for whom the women provide sanctuary, but also in the house help, each of whom has some sort of disability. The women themselves are scrutinized visually and share in the deformity, though to a lesser degree. They are withered with age, or too plump or too big. No one inside Millenium Hall is considered beautiful. The land and buildings are beautiful, but have been made so by the women. The land has been fixed, rescued, improved. All of these details suggest that the society itself is physically imperfect in persons, structures, and ideas, and that the mode of operation is reform or improvement, not creation. Again, perfection is left to the women and, specifically, to their minds. The perfection is an internal feature. This is another way Scott gets around the difficulty of land and the physical gender politics of the genre. In spite of the fact that the utopia is located on an English estate, the utopia is not the estate. It is not land. It is not even bodies. It is the mind. Scott's utopia is a mental utopia.

Scott's society, then, represents the female mind—rescues it, in fact, from its poor reputation in public discourse about romance. This is what the virtuous heroine's

[178] Rees, "Utopian Imagination," 218.

imagination can achieve when left to herself, it says. It is the story she would choose for herself—and did initially, as Miss Melvyn's and Miss Mancel's story shows. The first step in rescuing the feminine mind begins with the rècits where we see the women's unwilling participation in the adventures imagined for them by British society. The second step is in contrasting that narrative with their life at Millenium Hall. This society is the product of their imagination, and as a story, it certainly comes off more rational than the narrative attributed to British society in the histories. The link between this society and the female imagination is highlighted by the initial portrayal of the women, who we see first involved in various artistic pursuits: engraving, drawing, carving, painting. Their products, we are told, come "out of [their] own imagination," just as we are, similarly, to read the society as something that puts the female imagination down on paper (59), and it *is* imaginative. Their society includes a system of motivation to keep the village girls chaste, an enclosure to protect deformed individuals from society, a rug manufactory run by women, and a school that caters to the education of girls. All of these would be considered unique in contrast with the world the women had been living in. What is more to the point, though, is that these are rational features. This is important because, while being unique, these systems are still normal enough to prove their value in a male world. Sir George Ellison certainly sees their value, and he believes the rest of the world will as well.

The other comparison the two kinds of storytelling beg shows, again, the women's excellence and their essential role in the reform of British society. The juxtaposition of this society with the histories creates a cause-and-effect relationship between the two that suggests it is Britain's fault that the women had not previously

achieved this kind of community. As the speaker of those histories, Mrs. Maynard (and, by association, her fellow heroines) is authorized to vocalize cause and effect on a national scale, rather than simply the personal. While most utopias compare the ideal society and the present one, that comparison is generally implicit. The traveler's society is not discussed because the new society automatically compels the comparison the author is after. In this novel, however, the author makes that comparison explicit by allowing Mrs. Maynard to tell the story of present-day Britain through the lives of the female founders. Instead of allowing the reader to intuit the differences, she vocalizes the present half of the comparison. This suggests that neither the rest of Britain, nor even Sir George Ellison, has the grasp on narrative the women do, and that Britain requires their reading skills to guide it. This is what Crystal B. Lake means when she says that Scott "appropriates the antiquary's patriotic concern for the material remains of Britain's past in order to position women as both historical agents and agents of history. . . . Scott suggests women make excellent historians."[179] The women can see what the past has of value, but also what the present actions will lead to in the future. They are the perfection, the utopian hope of Britain.

In fact, the society sets itself up as concerned particularly with Britain, but at the expense of another characteristic of the utopia—escapism. Traditional utopias involve literal travel, not simply the impression of it. Many critics have commented on Scott's choice to place her female society within England, as well as within a British estate.[180]

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[179] Crystal B. Lake, "Redecorating the Ruin: Women and Antiquarianism in Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall*," *ELH 76* (2009): 662.

[180] One of these is Nicole Pohl, "'Sweet Place, Where Virtue Then Did Rest': The Appropriation of the Country-House Ethos in Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall*," *Utopian Studies: Journal of the Society for Utopian Studies* 7, no. 1 (1996): 49-59. She argues that Scott appropriates the British country manor as a place of resistance, but in doing so, sacrifices some of the potential radicalism of her utopia. Eve Tavor Bannet, in "The Bluestocking Sisters: Women's Patronage, Millenium Hall and 'The Visible Providence of

Most of those suggest this is a concession Scott makes, evidence of the limits of her position as female in a male world, or female writer in a male genre. It seems strange, then, that so many people travel in the novel. Ellison, of course, travels to Jamaica and back. Mr. D'Avora travels through all the countries of Europe and parts of Asia and Africa. Sir Edward Lambton goes to Germany. Mr. and Mrs. Mancel go to America. Mr. Thornby, back from America and the Indies, is buried in Florence. Enough people travel outside of Britain in the novel to remind us repeatedly that there is a world outside of England. It is as if Scott is making a point. The six founders of Millenium Hall, with the fortunes they inherited, had the means to travel, yet the number of people who *do* travel remind us that the women chose not to. In a novel employing conventions of the utopia, where the society is usually found at a distance from present-day society, this choice seems to suggest the aims of the society are *with* Britain.

Millenium Hall replaces the escapism of the utopia with that concern of romance: duty. All of the characters who leave England echo the experience of the protagonist in a traditional utopia. Of all of these characters, only Mr. D'Avora does so "with discernment and the curiosity of wisdom, . . . he received such improvement of understanding, as few travelers can boast" (95). Afterward, he returns to become the adviser to Miss Mancel and Miss Melvyn, employing his knowledge within Britain's boundaries. The others leave England to escape—Sir Edward escapes a love affair, Mr. and Mrs. Mancel escape the effects of a duel. In each of these cases, they leave behind someone who suffers from their absence. In the hierarchy of morals the novel establishes, these stories suggest that leaving Britain is an abandonment of duty. This is not a novel about a far-off ideal world;

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a Country,'" *Eighteenth-Century Life* 30, no. 1 (2005): 25-55 says *MH* participates in a trend for women's country estate fiction, which was about social policing. Broome, *Fictive Domains,* also argues that Scott toys with innovation while adhering to the strictures of patriarchal society.

it is a novel about Britain. Instead, Scott plants her female society in England where they employ British structures, such as the British country estate and the British economic system. Therefore, the women of Millenium Hall—who are really the women of romance—are held up as the utopian model for all of England.

As such, *Millenium Hall* allows the women not only to author their own stories, but also to preserve their vested interest in example. While they can speak, or read, for all of Britain, they do not. This is because, as Miss Mancel says, "'We do not set up for reformers, . . . we wish to regulate ourselves by the laws laid down to us, and as far as our influence can extend, endeavour to enforce them; beyond that small circle all is foreign to us; . . . to mend the world requires much abler hands'" (166). The women are not attempting to tutor Britain; they are simply living their own lives. Again, this dismantles the idea that the society is a utopia. However, this does not mean Britain cannot learn from them. To learn from the women would mean to learn from their example, not their words. Example is important because it is the least coercive form of instruction. It is the only kind of instruction that does not impose someone else's imagination on others. The women of Millenium Hall want British society to read their character as example in order to avoid being coercive and also to help them develop and practice better reading strategies in the process.

Sir George Ellison's role makes this possible. He holds the women up as an example to the world. It is his words we hear. But his narration is, again, part of the tutoring the book provides its readers. Recent scholarship on *Millenium Hall* has been concerned with the figure of the male narrator. Almost all of these writers suggest he is

there to be taught.[181] I would argue that Ellison's presence has more to do with the education of the reader. He holds the women up to the world for emulation, but, as Cruise argues, Ellison is an unreliable narrator, displaying in his errors the problems of representation to which women are subject.[182] We have to read the character of the women through his words, determine what he is not saying, what is wrong with what he is saying, and find the women through him and in spite of him.

However, utopia suffers from the same elision of character as romance. This is both because of their particular spokesperson, but also because of the society they come from which has already demonstrated, in the women's histories, their penchant for plot over character. Sir George Ellison, for instance, on first seeing the landscape surrounding Millenium Hall, launches into text. The fact that he is coding the scenery with textual markers suggests Ellison is looking for a structure—a society and its physical structures, yes, but also the textual equivalent of structure, genre. What he should have seen was woman. But he does not. That fact is highlighted by his misreading of the genre he falls into—romance. He calls the landscape a "fairy land," suggesting a fantastical, mysterious causality. He cannot possibly imagine human women could have shaped the landscape as he saw it; he therefore removes the actors—the cause of the landscape's appearance—and assigns it to mystical creatures that do not exist. He should have seen character; instead, he reaches for plot and lands on creatures that compel plot but have no subjectivity or interiority. Again and again, as he tours Millenium Hall, Sir George enacts the same

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[181] These are James Cruise, "A House Divided: Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall*," *SEL 35* (1995): 555-73, as I mention later, and Eve Tavor Bannet, "Sarah Scott and America: Sir George Ellison, The Man of Real Sensibility and the Squire of Horton," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 22, no. 4 (Summer 2010): 631-56, who claims the women teach Ellison how to be a good English squire. Not Caretta, who says Scott's novels argue social reform requires a male agent.

[182] James Cruise, "A House Divided," 555-73.

gesture. He continually asks about the things he sees, the structures—buildings, walls, gardens, bodies—and misses the women's minds, the personal, internal utopia.

However, Sir George Ellison is not the only one to cloud character, or behavior, with structure. Critics have as well. Eve Tavor Bannet, for instance, suggests Millenium Hall is intended to be a miniature model of large-scale government and an argument about how Britain should proceed from here.[183] Her commentary focuses on the society as a structure, a model. She inscribes the society as utopian rather than the women themselves. She is not alone. One concern of recent scholarship is the exclusionary nature of the society the women form in Cornwall.[184] Another is the form of capitalism they employ, and the vertical hierarchy it establishes.[185] Both of these concerns focus on the structure itself, missing the compelling force behind it, the women. The point here, however, is that the women are internally ideal. They are truly benevolent and good and as such, can facilitate capitalist exchange benevolently regardless of the physical structure they employ, just as they could facilitate socialist programs or other systems of government, but this is also why their society is exclusive. The flawed systems (like the deformed bodies) only work smoothly when the people are utopian. To admit everyone

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[183] Eve Tavor Bannet, "Sarah Scott and America," 631-56.

[184] Julie McGonegal, "The Tyranny of Gift Giving: The Politics of Generosity in Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* and *Sir George Ellison*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 19, no. 3 (Spring 2007): 291-306 links the society's exclusivity to its conservatism. Not only does she exclude people from Millenium Hall, but she preserves the British class system that excludes lower classes from the experience of upper classes. Betty Schellenberg, "Making Good Use of History: Sarah Robinson Scott in the Republic of Letters," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 32 (2003): 45-68, says *Millenium Hall*, modeled after Scott's historical texts, is inclusive but only in a way that serves a male, upper-class society. My argument is that Scott has to preserve the British class system and serve a male, upper-class ethos because her goal is to convince men that the female imagination is capable of rational thought. Part of that argument has to include retaining the patriarchal structures they had already established.

[185] In addition to those critics mentioned in the previous note, McGonegal says it is capitalistic and that its reforms work within the system of capitalism by suggesting people have to look the other way, essentially, in order to find their oases. Cruise says the men mistake the society as capitalistic because they do not know how to do otherwise. Lake, Harriet Guest, and Ann VanSant, "Historicizing Domestic Relations: Sarah Scott's Use of the 'Household Family,'" *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 17, no. 3 (Apr. 2005): 373-90, suggest it displays a return to an idealized system from the past.

would ruin the integrity and foundation of their society. The women, themselves, dismiss structures. When talking to Lamont, who like the others is concerned about structures, in this case law, Miss Mancel responds, "From whence . . . should a Christian take them, from the Alcoran, think you, or from the wiser Confucius, or would you seek in Coke on Littleton that you may escape the iron hand of the legislative power? No, surely, the Christian's law is written in the Bible" (166). While Miss Mancel makes it clear that her concern is with the Christian, she also makes it clear that there exist other people than the Christian, who likewise have texts and systems of behavior available to them. She is recommending a system of matching. Christians should follow the bible, not because everyone should or because it is right, but because it is *their* book. And while she goes on to suggest everyone in a Christian land should follow biblical law, she still distinguishes Christian land from non-Christian. More importantly, she is trying to redirect Lamont's attention from systems of behavior to itself. It matters little which system you use; what matters is your response to it, the kind of behavior you match it with.

In this way, *Millenium Hall* actually protests against the possibility of a perfect society, launching a critique of the utopian form. The book suggests that a person can be perfectly formed to govern and tutor British society by example. A society or structure, however, cannot be perfect. This is brought home by Miss Mancel, again, in her conversation about laws. When asked about those who do not follow the dictates of the bible the way they do, she says "'What will be their fate . . . I do not pretend even to suppose, my business is to take care of my own. . . . Laws are not abrogated by being infringed, nor does the disobedience of others make the observance of them less my duty. I am required to answer only for myself, and it is not man whom I am ordered to imitate"

(167). Her comments here point to one of the problems inherent in a model society or utopia, that of forcing people to imitate something external. That would be too much like their experience in British society, where they were driven by imaginations external to them. In fact, it is their experience delineated in their histories that has taught them about the oppression of being subject to other people's imaginative ideals. Instead, as Miss Mancel says, not only is their reform personal and internal, but all ideal reform should be. Ironically, this is both setting up rules for an ideal society, and dismantling the idea of rules for or models of idealism. The only rule is that only behavior can be perfected, and it comes from within. It cannot be forced.

Again, this is part of the text that helps to reclaim the female mind. The fact that she dismisses the idea of a structure with which to confine others suggests that she has been a deeper reader than the average British subject. Her understanding has come, in part, from watching the causes and effects in her own life and the lives of those around her. It has also come from being a figure of unrecognized difference in British society. She is, after all, perfect. That, alone, makes her different. The difference between the heroine and the common being is perhaps best illustrated in the story of the other gentlewomen who live on their estate. These women are not given stories who, by rank, are the same as the six female founders. Only two differences divide the other gentlewomen from the women with stories. One is the gentlewomen's lack of a fortune. The other is that the gentlewomen have to be taught how to live in this society. Mrs. Maynard says, "For the first year of this establishment my friends dedicated most of their time and attention to this new community . . . endeavouring to cultivate in this sisterhood that sort of disposition which is most productive of peace" (117-18). It took a year for the

heroines to implant in these other females the virtue and morality that separate the two groups of women. Additionally, the word "endeavouring," suggests such learning is "not without its difficulties" (118) as Mrs. Maynard, herself, admits. While these nameless women have to be taught how to behave in Millenium Hall, the six originals already know. They are virtuous above the common gentlewoman. In fact, they are nearly perfect. Millenium Hall emphasizes that difference. In fact, the deformities of Millenium Hall emphasize extreme difference. They hyperbolize not just the text's critique of the utopia as oppressive model for imitation, but also the socialist sameness that many traditional utopias choose for their model at the service of equality. Ironically, it is this understanding of difference and their unwillingness to interfere with it that suits the women to be the caretakers of Britain.

The text expels us from utopia once and for all with Ellison's final comment on the society. Here, he uses the language of romance to describe Millenium Hall: "All that romance ever represented in the plains of Arcadia are much inferior to the charms of Millenium Hall, except the want of shepherds be judged a deficiency that nothing else can compensate; there indeed they fall short of what romantic writers represent, and have formed a female Arcadia" (223). While this is still a misreading (he still refers to what he saw as "the charms of Millenium Hall," rather than women. Though he does refer to the charms later as "they," his language masks their status as humans), the really significant point here is that he has been given no new language to talk about what he has seen. Never does he name it a utopia, reminding us that this is not one, but his use of romance is also as a comparative scale rather than a classification. As a result, the society he has experienced has simply become a negative: it is like romance but not romance. By not

giving Ellison any other language for talking about Millenium Hall, Scott expels us from genre altogether. She takes away models and the imitation they demand.

It is this use of romance to dispel genre that makes Sarah Scott's novel radical. Her dream of a new kind of utopia embodied by woman rather than text is also radical, but only against the backdrop of other utopias. Contemporary critical anxiety about the status of Scott's text as a utopia—whether it is too conservative, for instance, or not radical enough—in some ways enacts the same damage to the female imagination that eighteenth-century discourse did. Such anxiety acts out the imitation that became a source of trauma to the romance protagonist—forcing external rules or models on a text. This criticism attempts to establish rules for what radicalism looks like. Ruth Perry, for instance, in an analysis of four eighteenth-century British utopias, concludes that radicalism can be monitored by the place women are given within the new society.[186] Such models miss the radicalism that takes other forms—as does Sarah Scott's.

Scott's casting of woman as the utopian future of Britain is also what makes her text utopi*an*—if not a utopia. Her text is hopeful. She is giving Britain something solid on which to depend: a woman, a person, rather than an imaginative text. The virtuous British woman, she says, if we attend to her closely enough (and we have to do the work), can guide us in the right paths, and because the virtuous British woman already exists—as llustrated in the parallels between Millenium Hall and her own life—this dream for the future has more potential than a fantastic, faraway dreamscape.[187]

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[186] Ruth Perry, "Bluestockings in Utopia," in *History, Gender and Eighteenth-Century Literature,* ed., Beth Fowks Tobin (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 159-78.
[187] Rizzo, "Two Versions of Community," 199, argues that *Millenium Hall* is the collective product of a society very similar to the one described in it—driven by philanthropy and good works.

FRANCES BURNEY'S *CECILIA*

Like Elizabeth Montagu and Sarah Scott, Frances Burney seeks a sense of female empowerment through relationships with others. Unlike the two sisters, however, and as Kristina Straub has already argued, she locates that possibility in marriage.[188] This is in part due to the fact that all four of her novels end with the conventional marriage of a romance plot. And these conventional endings are, in part, why Martha G. Brown concludes that Frances Burney's work owes its plot, themes, and characters to the romance tradition. "Each heroine," Brown says, "has her chivalrous knight to protect her. Evelina is guarded and guided by Orville, who is a paragon of courtesy and morality. Cecilia has Mortimer Delvile, Camilla has Edgar Mandlebert, and Juliet has Harleigh—all of whom are versions of Orville."[189] Brown is arguing against feminist readings of Burney such as Straub's, who believes coded into Burney's romantic relationships are messages about "structural weakness[es] within the system that relegates female happiness to male protection."[190]

In fact, Burney has a complex sense of romance. While Brown's claim is accurate, particularly about *Evelina*—Burney does employ romance convention—her assessment of Burney's use of convention is grossly oversimplified. After *Evelina*, Burney's use of romance becomes a strategy rather than an outline, allowing her, for

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[188] Kristina Straub, *Divided Fictions: Fanny Burney and Feminine Strategy* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), 125.
[189] Martha G. Brown, "Fanny Burney's 'Feminism,': Gender or Genre?" in *Fetter'd or Free?: British Women Novelists, 1670-1815* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1986), 35.
[190] Straub, *Divided Fictions*, 210.

instance, to produce the unusual story of marriage found in *Cecilia*, her second novel. In this chapter, I will argue that Burney's fiction refashions romance to demonstrate what it takes to empower a female. This is not simply a critique of marriage. I do not believe, as Straub does, that marriage is the end and target of Burney's thesis. I argue, instead, that marriage is the social structure within and around which Burney and her heroines must work to find political power. Burney's novels are about the public sphere, and her use of romance convention, among a host of other textualities, in *Cecilia* parallels the use of social convention (marriage) to give her heroine a voice in that body.

To argue this, I first discuss *Evelina*'s generically standard romance in order to illustrate its easy equation of marriage as the utopian potential for female voice in the public sphere. *Evelina*'s traditional romance also helps highlight by contrast the conventional digressions of Burney's second novel, as well as *Cecilia*'s questioning of the marriage contract and its societal function. I show how *Cecilia*'s digressions from romance eventually liberate her heroine from many of the restrictions of the marital utopian solution for female agency. At the same time, I demonstrate how Burney's strategic use of romance compares female experience with male experience in order to tutor Cecilia's husband and readers in the difficulty of arriving at such autonomy. Finally, I briefly discuss how Burney's final novel, *The Wanderer*, continues the program in *Cecilia*. It widens the gap between marriage and its associations with liberation or female voice. Burney's final novel, I will show, suggests the British government, not just the husband, needs to witness female experience.

While Burney questions marriage and its potential for women throughout her writing, she does not dismiss it. She recognizes marriage as part of the necessary lived

experience of women in Britain. As such, her model of social reform is a compromise with the status quo, much like the solutions of the other women writers in this study. Her model employs marriage, but suggests that its success relies on men who can make it work. The structure of her second and final novels suggests that men must witness women's difficulties in society in order to bring about the reform of marriage that women require. Her complex use of romance allows her to both present and self-consciously critique the model she employs for empowering women. While Burney's use of conventional social structures could be seen as conservative, her rejection of other structural possibilities for female agency (female society, for instance) suggests that men and women are necessary to each other. Burney believes that women are important to men and society and such a position is both utopian and proto-feminist.

Before I begin, I will provide a brief summary of *Cecilia*'s very complex and lengthy plot. *Cecilia* begins as its eponymous heroine, a wealthy heiress and orphan, leaves Suffolk for London, a move necessitated by the death of her uncle. She travels with Mr. Monckton, a friend from Suffolk who secretly plans to marry her when his wife dies, and Mr. Harrel, one of the three guardians provided her by her uncle. The reader learns Cecilia's inheritance from her uncle is contingent on a clause that requires her husband to take her name. She moves in with Mr. and Mrs. Harrel. Dissatisfied by the life of dissipation the Harrels lead, Cecilia seeks out her other two guardians, both of whom she finds unhelpful: Mr. Briggs because of his extreme spendthriftiness; Mr. Delvile because of his excessive pride in his family name. Cecilia lands on a scheme of retirement and benevolence to help her cope with life at the Harrels. She does so with the help of Mr. Albany, a social pariah who wanders through high society, preaching charity

to the wealthy. Mr. Harrel, however, has designs on her fortune. Through his manipulations, she runs up a debt with a loan shark to be drawn from her inheritance when she comes of age. During her time at the Harrels, she meets young Delvile and conceives a growing affection for him. She also meets Mrs. Delvile and develops a friendship with her. As Mr. Harrel's manipulations escalate, Cecilia makes plans to move in with the Delvile's, but not before Mr. Harrel makes her accompany him and his wife to Vauxhall. At Vauxhall, Mr. Harrel kills himself in a public spectacle. At the same time, creditors ransack the Harrel's bankrupt estate to find payment for their many unpaid debts. Both Mrs. Harrel and Cecilia return to the country. Mrs. Harrel goes to live with her brother; Cecilia goes to live with an old friend, Mrs. Charlton. Young Delvile visits her there and convinces her to marry him. She travels to London with Mrs. Charlton for the wedding, but runs out before the ceremony is complete. She returns to the country where Mrs. Delvile visits her to elicit a promise never to marry her son. She bursts a blood vessel and Cecilia nurses her until Delvile can safely escort her back to town. Mrs. Charlton, whose health suffered from the trip to London, dies, and Cecilia, come of age, takes possession of her estate. Delvile returns with news that his mother has agreed to their marriage. They marry, but Delvile wounds Monckton in a duel after discovering his treachery toward Cecilia. Delvile leaves for the continent with his mother hoping, both, to relieve her lingering ill health and escape the law in the case of Monckton's death. While Delvile is in Europe , the next in line to Cecilia's fortune demands her estate, citing the first marriage attempt as proof that she is now "Mrs. Delvile," and has therefore defaulted on the terms of the inheritance. Cecilia is forced to abandon her estate. She travels to London where she encounters Delvile at the Belfields. Delvile assumes she is there to

meet Mr. Belfield and leaves angry. Cecilia tries to follow him, but loses her senses and is found by the owners of a pawn shop, who lock her in an upstairs room and advertise for her identity. She is reunited with Delvile and returned to her senses. The circumstances surrounding her brief period of insanity help to reconcile the old Delvile with his son's marriage.

In spite of her use of romance convention, Burney's fiction always reminds us that there are other kinds of textual conventions available. In *Evelina*, her characters provide the reader with a motley crue of texts: Mrs. Selwyn gives us satire; Mr. Macartney, poetry; Captain Mirvan and Madame Duval, farce; Sir Clement Willoughby, the gothic or dark romance. Straub even argues the most accurate seat of romance in the novel is the Evelyns, who provide us with a distant plot acted out among characters that are flat because unknown to us.[191] This would, of course, suggest that Evelina has it in her blood, that she inherits romance. She cannot help it. Among all of these literary options, Orville is the utopia. He is "the most amiable of men" and a "being superior to all his race" (262) who quickly becomes synonymous with Evelina's hope for a perfect world.[192] He is the only person who can make her doubt the goodness of the world, whose supposed indiscretion (unlike Sir Clement's multiple indiscretions) forces out of her the complaint, "Yet I cannot but lament to find myself in a world so deceitful, where we must suspect what we see, distrust what we hear and doubt even what we feel!" (259).

Lord Orville as utopia is appropriate. As the man who will marry the heroine, he is her world. The association between hero and literary genre that reorganizes society into its ideal form serves as a reminder of the eighteenth-century role of marriage in political

[191] Straub, *Divided Fictions*, 54.
[192] All references to *Evelina* are to the Oxford edition: Frances Burney, *Evelina*, ed. Edward A. Bloom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

representation. As the one person in the family who can vote, the husband was the ruler, governor, and political voice of the wife, a relationship enunciated in eighteenth-century public discourse, for example, in the 1770s pamphlet that compared the relationship between England and America to the relationship between a husband and wife.[193] However, husband as representative in the public sphere is also the party line, the easy figure, and one not questioned in *Evelina*. Of course, the novel concludes with the heroine marrying the utopia. That is how England would want it.

In addition to being politically and socially upright, *Evelina* is also generically conventional in its use of romance. The heroine enters the world, young and unprotected, and encounters a series of difficulties or adventures from which the hero delivers her through honorable marriage in the end. Among other things, the novel's choice of hero—rigidly upright and politically optimistic—situates Burney's first novel safely within romance convention and shuts down other possibilities in the text.

It is as a standard of romance convention that *Evelina* is useful in a discussion of *Cecilia*. While Burney's second novel also begins with a heroine entering the world, young and unprotected, it does not accurately end in marriage, as Brown argues it does. The marriage occurs roughly one hundred pages before its conclusion. The novel, instead, ends with the hero's recognition of his wife's true worth and their marriage's acceptance in the public arena. The fact that Burney separates marriage from the rest of the resolution diverges from romance convention. Additionally, whether to get married and a failed attempt to do so become, in *Cecilia*, part of the difficulties the heroine faces rather than the solution. Further, in Brown's quote used above, it is telling that she has

[193] Megan Woodworth, "'If a man dared act for himself': Family Romance and Independence in Frances Burney's *Cecilia*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 22, no. 2 (Winter 2009-10): 360-61.

many words for Orville, describing him as "a paragon of courtesy and morality," and very few for the others. Burney's other heroes, on close inspection, are more difficult to assimilate into romance convention, so it is fitting that she does not closely inspect them, but simply dismisses them as "versions of Orville."[194] In these and other changes that Burney makes to the operations of romance in her second novel, Burney proves herself a craftsman of the highest order, working with romance conventions to her own ends. In this complex, liberating approach to romance, Burney authorizes, eventually, the same social autonomy for her female protagonist, but the greatest usefulness of romance in *Cecilia* is in its demonstration of the difficulty involved in arriving at that autonomy.

Perhaps the most obvious difference between her first and second novels is *Cecilia*'s rejection of the husband as an emblem of the utopian social contract. Near the end of the novel, and after Cecilia has experienced many of the difficulties attendant upon her tie to Delvile, Miss Belfield exclaims to the heroine, "were I married, —and *so* married, I should want neither house, nor fine cloaths, nor riches, nor any thing; —I should not care where I lived, —every place would be paradise!" (865).[195] The fact that such a sentiment is spoken by the young, inexperienced, and untaught Henrietta rather than Cecilia herself, marks the difference between the two novels. *Cecilia* and *Evelina* agree that marriage is the best possibility for female empowerment; however, *Cecilia*, published four years later, gives up *Evelina*'s relatively easy claim to marriage as paradise, and its accompanying ideal public sphere. Along these lines, Terry Castle calls

[194] Brown, "Fanny Burney's 'Feminism,'" 35.
[195] All references to *Cecilia* are to the Oxford edition: Frances Burney, *Cecilia*, eds., Peter Sabor and Margaret Anne Doody (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Burney's second novel a dystopia full of failed revolutionary hopes.[196] Yet the book still ends with peace and tranquility and hope that shines through mitigating circumstances.

The novel makes the social contract a thematic concern right off the bat by staging a conversation between several male characters about the role of the individual in society. The conversation occurs as a journey is beginning for Cecilia between one society and another. Its impetus is Mr. Monckton's attempt to make socially appropriate a mean remark made by the jealous Lady Monckton, a lady who by all accounts does not work well with anyone. From this start, the conversation begun with and about Cecilia spins into a heated political argument between two men: Belfield, who argues for liberalism and individualism, and Monckton, who, as Woodworth has noted, takes the side of the aristocracy.[197] Ironically, Cecilia's inaugurating comment before Lady Monckton's cruel remark was an expression of her fear that Bury would forget her. This is just what happens as the conversation takes off. Monckton is socializing his wife's behavior. In so doing, he is playing the role of the appropriate British husband—governing, adjudicating, pleading her cause. Yet as he and Mr. Belfield respond to each other, they create a circle that literally edges the women out. Mr. Belfield begins with his address to Cecilia: "'You intend, then, madam, . . . in defiance of these maxims of the world, to be guided by the light of your own understanding'" (14). However, neither he nor Monckton wait for her response. They simply keep speaking without her, both certain they are in the right. Perhaps the men are supposed to speak for their wives as Monckton does initially. One wonders at the efficacy of such a program with a man who is hardly a Lord Orville. Monckton, who we have just been informed is constantly working against

[196] Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986), 258.
[197] Woodworth, "If a man dared," 358.

the interests of his wife, is hardly the beneficent ruler and guide that Burney's first hero would be. With this prefatory material, and the absence of female speech in the conversation, one has to wonder if a conversation about agency can ever, accurately, be a conversation about female agency.

It is no coincidence that this conversation happens when Cecilia is "poised at the threshold of initiation into experience, . . . ready to undergo the symbolic *rite de passage*, which involves testing and self-discovery," a plot structure that Martha G. Brown calls "debts to the romance tradition."[198] Brown argues that this position of the heroine could not possibly be a feminist ploy because of all the male heroes who have been positioned likewise in other romances. The men's conversation about agency, however, is essentially about the plausibility of this very plot structure, thematizing it just as it occurs in the novel. Like Brown, the men do not make a distinction between genders, but the novel does. The lack of female input in the conversation suggests a comparison between female and male experience, especially since Belfield, the resident individualist, picks up his line from Cecilia herself. The novel, as it plays out, consistently compares the two—Belfield and Cecilia—as they argue, as this conversation already hints, that a woman's experience is different than a man's. Monckton has already played Cecilia's governor in Bury. We have been told he has been the "principal ornament" of Cecilia's social circle. His position in this debate foreshadows the difficulty he—and symbolically the British public—will present to Cecilia in her future attempts to live Belfield's position.

Another way the novel differs from *Evelina*'s standard romance is by giving the task of representing utopia to someone other than the hero. Instead of a hero who is "a being superior to his race" (262), Delvile is simply the most like Cecilia, which Henrietta

[198] Brown, "Fanny Burney's 'Feminism,'" 32, 29.

Belfield refers to as a family likeness (776). It is, instead, Belfield, initially, who serves as a representation of the utopia, and his utopia is not the stagnant perfection of Orville, but an agitated journey that carries on throughout the book. Instead of suggesting that Cecilia is headed toward an already carved out spot in an ideal state, this change provides an interesting contrast between Belfield and Cecilia, recommending to us, again, the differences between men and women in power and liberation.

Belfield is recognizably Samuel Johnson's Rasselas, searching for an ideal situation and never satisfied.[199] For this purpose, it is appropriate that he is the resident Jacobin in the above discussion. He could hardly be an inheriting son and "commit [him]self . . . to the current of the world."[200] This is precisely what Belfield does in the novel: moves with the current. At the time of the above conversation, Belfield has already changed his life course three times: from the army, to the law, to gentleman awaiting a preferment. In this last capacity, he finds himself in a situation similar to any female, but particularly Cecilia, who has to depend on the goodness of others rather than the tie of blood. He spends more time in this liminal state than he does with any of the other professions he chooses thereafter. Arguably, that is because it is in this state that Belfield most closely parallels Cecilia and in which he critiques the same fashionable society in which Cecilia circulates. It is, for instance, during this time that Belfield loses a duel to Sir Robert Floyer, an event that could be seen as a continuation of the argument with Monckton. Thereafter, when Belfield reappears in another guise, it is always Cecilia who

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[199] Jane Spencer has noted this in her article, "Evelina and Cecilia," in *The Cambridge Companion to Frances Burney,* ed., Peter Sabor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 23-37. Beyond simply arguing that Belfield is Rasselas, she argues that *Cecilia* as a whole is Johnsonian, and that Burney's choice of style allows her to transcend the limits of a female author. How she differs from my claim is that she argues Belfield misapplies Johnsonian rhetoric. I argue instead that Burney demonstrates with Belfield the impossibility of any utopia.

[200] Johnson, *Rasselas.* 115.

discovers him—this time in the country, another time at the book-sellers. These continual coincidences are part of the fantastic machinery of the novel that continually links them together, begging comparison.

Belfield's speeches to Cecilia as he moves through the current of the world identify his journey, like Rasselas's, as a search for utopia. Both Belfield and Rasselas are driven by that "blessing of hope," Ernst Bloch's utopian function, but Belfield also serves as a figure from romance: in the figure of Don Quixote, his choice of persona at the masquerade.[201] Certainly, his status as Don Quixote, wanderer from the fields of romance, comments on his pursuit of utopia. While Rasselas becomes disillusioned, Belfield's readers as well as Belfield always have the potential for satisfaction. When in the country, he says, "I have found out, I repeat, the true secret of happiness, Labour with Independence" (664). Then, again, when turned writer, "I never before found happiness. I have now adopted, though poor, the very plan of life I should have elected if rich; my pleasure, therefore, is become my business, and my business my pleasure" (736). In such declarations, Belfield earns his association with the fighter of windmills, but the search for utopia also becomes associated with Quixote's whimsical journey.

In truth, Belfield's journey through life is not just hope for an ideal social contract, but also the search to reconcile that with economic viability. In this attempt, his utopian striving is particularly quixotic. In both of the instances mentioned above, for instance, Belfield's newfound happiness is discovered in economic pursuits. In the first instance, happiness comes from labor, the result of which is money. In the second case, happiness comes from business and pleasure coinciding. Belfield's adjustments and readjustments as he moves from place to place seem to happen here, in the dynamics

[201] Ibid., 49. Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature,* 73.

between happiness and financial solvency. In this sense, his journey resonates with *Rasselas* where Imlac, speaking of that continual flux or current of the world, also picks up the language of financial exchange: "something is hourly lost, and something acquired."[202] This, of course, must be an intentional association in a novel that has so much to do with money, but it is precisely the reason Belfield always fails.[203] He is not willing to leave society to find his utopia. Regardless of the degree of individuality he aims at, he has to somehow make it saleable. This forces a compromise that automatically lessens the individualism, and thus idealism, of Belfield's desired state.

The other system Belfield finds himself going head to head with is family. His mother and sister, while to some degree financially independent of him, rely on him both emotionally and intellectually. They expect him to represent them in the world. His role as their representative is made clear with Mrs. Belfield's obvious bias in favor of her son. She prefers her son in every way over her daughter. This situation is echoed in two other families of the novel, both from different strata in society. One is the Hills. As Cecilia listens to Mrs. Hill's story for the first time, she remarks, "'Good heaven, how severe a lot! But tell me, why is it you seem to love your Billy so much better than the rest of your children?'" To this Mrs. Hill replies, "He worked with his father, and all the folks used to say he was the better workman of the two" (86). Billy, then, is her favorite because he

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[202] Johnson, *Rasselas*, 115.

[203] Susan C. Greenfield, "Money or Mind?: *Cecilia*, the Novel, and the Real Madness of Selfhood," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 33 (2004): 49-70, argues that the novel contributes to a discussion of unreality, and that the immateriality of imagination and madness in the novel work hand in hand with the immateriality of debt and economics. Helen Thompson, "Burney's Conservatism: Masculine Value and 'the Ingenuous Cecilia,'" in *Recognizing the Romantic Novel: New Histories of British Fiction, 1780-1830*, eds., Jillian Heydt-Stevenson and Charlotte Sussman (Liverpool, England: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 99-125, discusses money as a way to assess the value of names, aristocratic lineage, and old British values. Catherine Keohane, "'Too Neat for a Beggar': Charity and Debt in Burney's *Cecilia*," *Studies in the Novel* 33, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 379-401, discusses the role of giving in female charitable schemes in eighteenth-century Britain.

can work. He is her best representative out in the economic scene. Again, this is repeated in the Delvile family, where, even though Mortimer is their only son, Mrs. Delvile feels a motherly connection to Cecilia, yet is willing to sever that bond in favor of a son. In this case, Delvile is going to carry their name. While each of the sons' responsibilities differ, all three are the hope of their families, the ones who will serve as a representative in the world.[204] Belfield's ties to his family are what Cecilia worries over every time she runs into him in a new setting. As a female and an orphan, she can see the value of his family ties. Unprotected and alone as his mother and sister would be, Cecilia is a testament to the flaws of his planned, yet undiscovered utopia.

At the same time, Belfield is part of the undoing of Cecilia's own yearnings for utopia. Shortly after entering fashionable society in London, Cecilia makes plans to launch a charitable campaign for those less fortunate. This desire extends through much of the book, outliving every other pursuit in which she is involved. We are told: "In her sleep she bestowed riches, and poured plenty upon the land; she humbled the oppressor, she exalted the oppressed; slaves were raised to dignities, captives restored to liberty; beggars saw smiling abundance, and wretchedness was banished the world" (711). Cecilia's is certainly an exaggerated account of the human potential to enact change, especially when she dreams of herself being "supported by angels" (711). Keohane has already written about this passage, arguing effectively that Cecilia's ideas of charitable giving are stereotypic and conventional. Keohane argues that Harrel presents a new kind of needy public that Cecilia—and the world—is unequipped to deal with.[205] In fact, the book presents several ways in which the financial world confounds Cecilia's divine ideal.

[204] It is this detail, particularly, that makes it difficult for me to accept Brown's conclusion that there is little evidence Burney had any feminist intentions.
[205] Keohane, "'Too Neat for a Beggar'," 395.

One of those is Belfield, who apart from the bible is probably the inspiration for her dream. As Keohane notes, charitable giving was one way women in the eighteenth century could participate in the public arena.[206] Yet it is interesting that Cecilia lists in her dream several ways of helping people that are purely political in nature: raising slaves in social status and avenging the oppressed, for instance. This part of the passage has a distinct resonance with a speech Belfield had delivered to her prior to the dream. He says,

> Yes, the man whose only want is a few guineas, may, indeed, obtain them; but he who asks kindness and protection, whose oppressed spirit calls for consolation even more than his ruined fortune for repair, how is his struggling soul, if superior to his fate, to brook . . . the insolence of condescension. Yes, yes, the world will save the poor beggar who is starving; but the fallen wretch, who will not cringe for his support, may consume in his own wretchedness without pity and without help!" (667).

Like Keohane, Belfield argues that the poor beggar of her dream is an easy figure for charitable service, but that the oppressed fall through cracks. Cecilia's dream clearly includes the oppressed, yet her interaction with Belfield proves over and over again her inability to help him. In other words, if she is imagining aggrandized versions of charity, she is also dreaming of power far beyond her capacity. Her lack of power seems to come in the fact that she is female. While Delvile can and does assist Belfield, every attempt Cecilia makes to do so gets reinterpreted by his mother or someone else (Mr. Delvile, for instance) as selfishly motivated. Like Belfield, who butts up against the financial and familial structures of society, Cecilia clashes with its gender roles. Because she is female, she could not possibly be disinterested.

In aspiring to such a utopian ideal of giving, Cecilia is imitating eighteenth-century women who, according to Betty Rizzo, "had begun to discover in charitable societies and purposes a challenging as well as acceptable use for their talents," but her

[206] Keohane, "'Too Neat for a Beggar,'" 383.

plan also engages with popular literary explorations of such philanthropic schemes, the best known being Sarah Scott's utopian *Millenium Hall*, first published in 1762, twenty years before *Cecilia*, and followed by *Sir George Ellison*.[207] *Cecilia* is similar enough to this collection of novels about philanthropy by women that Julia Epstein groups them together in one category.[208] However, I argue the similarities between Burney's novel and both real and literary eighteenth-century charitable schemes are a little more self-conscious than Epstein gives Burney credit for. Scott's novel, *Millenium Hall,* helps demonstrate the similarities between *Cecilia* and popular conceptions of female philanthropy and its possibilities for female empowerment.

In her plan for happiness, Cecilia imitates the women of Millenium Hall. Her plan involves charitable giving and a search for female society, both elements of Scott's utopia. The fact that her dream is rooted in the bible also connects her to Scott's plan. The dream passage quoted above resembles Isaiah 58, which reads in part "to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, . . . and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house."[209] Among other connections to the bible, Scott's all-female society converts one of its male visitors to the good book.

However, Cecilia's plan has even more relevance to *Millenium Hall* with the introduction of Albany. In fact, Albany is more closely linked to *Millenium Hall* than Cecilia's plan is by itself. Albany is the bible-spouting social pariah who wanders through society and many of Burney's plot points. While Cecilia schemes prior to

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[207] Rizzo, *Companions Without Vows*, 23.
[208] Julia Epstein, *The Iron Pen: Frances Burney and the Politics of Women's Writing* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 159.
[209] Isaiah 58:6-7. While the footnote for the Oxford edition cites the *Aeneid* as the source of Burney's language here ("to tame the proud/the fetter'd slave to free"), I feel that it more closely resembles Old Testament language.

Albany's insistence, he is the motivating factor behind much of her work, and the facilitator of many of her charitable connections. Henrietta identifies Albany with *Millenium Hall* when she describes his ideal social contract: "for he thinks the whole world made to live in common, and that every one who is poor should ask, and every one who is rich should give" (209). According to her, he espouses the same doctrines as that female society: socialism and benevolent giving as the primary social principle.

Additionally, Albany's verbal output suggests he is a blend of the textual heritage of *Millenium Hall*. He is, for instance, a walking bible, the text provided as the impetus behind Scott's and other philanthropic schemes, but he is also a figure from romance. Perhaps the detail that most identifies Albany as a literary version of female philanthropy, and with *Millenium Hall* in particular, is the rècit that he delivers. While *Cecilia* sets itself up as a romance when its heroine enters London society, the narrative seldom stops to allow characters she encounters to tell their own story according to romance tradition. Albany is the exception. He is a true wanderer, but his rècit does more than identify him as a character from romance. It also reminds us of the way Scott uses this element of romance to distinguish her characters from the British society that has produced them. Like that novel, Albany also faults society in part for his problems, and the trauma he has experienced participates in the same pattern as the romance rècits of Scott's characters. Some of these are faultless victims of society; others learn from their errors and reform into fit residents of the female society. All of them have broken off all ties with the world. Albany, like the women, has broken all familial ties.

Albany is also connected to Sir George Ellison. Like Ellison, Albany has spent time in Jamaica. Albany grew up in the British colony; Sir George Ellison lived there for

twenty years. Both are marked by the misuse of a woman, and both have suffered ill health: Albany, madness on account of his treatment of his fiancé while seeking financial gain; Ellison, exhaustion from having "dedicated all his application to mercantile gain."[210] In *Millenium Hall*, Sir George Ellison discovers the female society and narrates it to the world. In *Cecilia*, Albany discovers the people in need of help and directs Cecilia to them.

I argue that Burney uses many of the elements of *Millenium Hall* in her own way in order to identify the flaws of such schemes in *Cecilia*. One of the major changes she makes is the relationship between the male spokesperson, women (or the female protagonist), and society. In *Millenium Hall*, Ellison stands between the women and society, interpreting them for the rest of Britain and championing their cause. Presumably, he does his job well and is able to implement their methods in a family setting in Scott's next novel. As such, he fulfills traditional male roles and smoothly evolves into the ideal male arbiter.

Albany is anything but traditional, and hardly ideal. He mediates between Cecilia and the poor, but he makes a poor spokesperson for either party. Miss Belfield confesses that his visits are intrusions. "He knows not the pain he gives, nor the mischief he may do" (208), she says. In Cecilia's case, we witness him again and again draw hasty and false accusations. For instance, he happens upon her just after her relationship with Delvile has been called off, and promptly accuses her of "caprice you dignify with the name of sorrow" (703): an unkind label from someone who has not been told any of the particulars of her situation. In fact, in this scene, he seems to merit the name of Albany from *King Lear* whose title character assumes for a time that his pain is worse than all

[210] Scott, *A Description of Millenium Hall*, 3.

others. "'Caprice!'" says Albany, "'tis joy! 'tis extacy compared with mine!" (703). In all of his interactions, he is still infected with the taint of cruelty. When he talks about his fiancé, for instance, he refers to her as a "fair flower," extending the comparison to the point of objectification, and employs the dehumanizing pronoun, "it" (705). Unlike Ellison, and perhaps because of his narratorial failings displayed here, Albany does not narrate others' stories. Burney does not trust him with the stories of the poor people he encounters. His speech, instead, is given to us from an outsider's perspective, so that we interpret him as one of many eccentric characters of the novel, and his speech, while imitating the language of the bible seems to be impelled by the fearsome Old Testament rather than the New Testament that Lamont reads at the end of *Millenium Hall*.

With such jarring characteristics, it is telling that Burney assigns him as her token representative of such female philanthropic schemes. He seems to have learned from the errors of his past, but instead of reforming, he becomes (or has been transformed into) someone who does not understand anyone but himself. It is as if he's been studying his story and his story alone. In fact, in this position, Albany makes an interesting contrast with Belfield who cannot be a true individualist because of his family ties. Albany has surmounted this obstacle by destroying the ties he had. He is essentially Belfield's desired outcome, and the picture is not pretty. Of course, the point here is not that Albany is not pretty, but that the realized dream of *Millenium Hall* is not.

In contrast with Cecilia, Albany displays yet another flaw of the principles behind *Millenium Hall*. Both Albany and Cecilia work together to help other people, but they employ different decision-making schemata. Always sensitive to social cues, Cecilia moves in and out of others' lives, making judgments to which we as readers are privy.

With the third-person omniscient narrator, we are allowed to see her reasoning. She is concerned with both social codes (who she should be seen alone with in a room) and people's feelings (whether it is fair for her to tell Miss Belfield about her feelings for Delvile). Albany, on the other hand, is not. His is harsh in comparison. What we learn most from seeing the two work together is, first, how little Albany understands of society. If he could follow social cues, he would have understood Cecilia's true nature much earlier. Second, we learn the inutility of Albany's black-and-white Old Testament logic in a world governed by codes and norms unwritten in the bible. This is in keeping with John Brewer's assessment of the late eighteenth-century as a period dominated by politeness, a concept which grew to "embrac[e] every aspect of manners and morals. . . . In opposition to political divisiveness and religious bigotry, politeness proposed a more harmonious ideal."[211] This politeness stemmed from the psychological understanding of humans as creatures riddled with passions that cannot be prevented, but must be controlled. Politeness was the drive to control the private emotions and present, in public, a persona that contributes to the wellbeing of others. It is this harmonious ideal of politeness to which Albany is oblivious, though Cecilia excels at it. And it, too, like the bible, is a form of morality. While Albany understands biblical morality, he fails at social morality.

Finally, Albany and Cecilia together instruct us once again about the difference between male and female liberty. It is worth pointing out that both Belfield and Albany are a cross between the utopia and romance. As such, they are at liberty both to wander in and out of society and to dream of an ideal world. Belfield serves as a cross between Rasselas and Don Quixote, utopian seeker and romance seeker. Both associations suggest

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[211] John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1997), 101, 100.

he fails in his attempts to separate himself from society and to find a perfect social contract. Albany is also a utopian seeker. He transforms Cecilia's dream of charitable giving into a utopian political philosophy. He is, after all, the one who, as Henrietta has told us, believes *all* people should live in common (209). However, his ideal social contract is intrusive and just as oblivious to the concerns of women as the current one. In addition, Albany is a realized romance. He has broken the family ties that hold Belfield back and therefore has the luxury of wandering through London as a social pariah. Albany is the realized version of Belfield while serving as the critique of the genres they both embody, but it is useful to note that they are male romance characters. Belfield is Don Quixote. Albany is Sir George Ellison, or perhaps a statement about the masculine nature of wish fulfillment in Scott's romance/utopia. By peopling her novel with these two characters, Burney seems almost to directly address Brown who, addressing feminist constructions of the dependence theme in Burney's novels, plaintively argues, "Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* are both cut off from their rightful inheritance; . . . Are we, therefore, to assume that Fielding . . . meant this as a 'metaphor' for men's 'economic dependence'? Of course not."[212] Here, Brown uses romance conventions to flatten any gender issues in Burney's (or other romance) novels, but in the characters of Belfield and Albany, Burney has populated her novel with male romance protagonists that beg comparison with the female protagonist.

Belfield and Albany suggest that you cannot flatten gender issues in romance or real life. Unlike these resident male romance characters, Cecilia, who is in the same position as the women of *Millenium Hall*—rich and unattached—cannot wander freely in society and cannot leave it altogether. Despite the fact that she has no husband to

[212] Brown, "Fanny Burney's 'Feminism,'" 31.

represent her, she is paradoxically more tied to society than her male equivalent simply because she has to have ties. She has to have connections. She is not her own keeper. Even in her charitable giving, as Albany shows, she has a male guardian—one about as effective as her three official guardians. Additionally, Cecilia, unlike Albany and Belfield, is not a text. Her language—except when she dreams—is not literary or textual. She is simply rooted in reality. While, as Martha Brown argues, she begins as a typical romance heroine, the ending of her story, I will argue, reverses her status, and while she longs to be part of a scheme like Millenium Hall, she is everywhere thwarted. Not only does this suggest once again that the female is firmly rooted in reality and in society, it also suggests she cannot indulge in extra-societal dreams.

While Albany's character flaws dismantle *Millenium Hall*'s utopia, Albany is not the only reason the novel provides for why schemes such as *Millenium Hall* and its real-life equivalents would not work. *Cecilia* also argues that female society is an impossibility. Cecilia spends the novel searching for female society. Much of the time, she finds herself stuck with female companions she would not choose, such as Mrs. Harrel. When she does find an ideal female companion, their mutual society gets dismantled by the men who surround them. She begins the novel with satisfying female companionship in the form of Mrs. Charlton, but that ends with the death of her uncle and the introduction into her life of her three guardians—all of whom live in London. When she meets Miss Belfield, she sees many happy hours ahead, but that gets interrupted by the presence of Belfield and Delvile, both of whom present the misinterpretations that force her to part with her new female friend. Again, with Mrs. Delvile, she believes herself endowed with friendship, but that gets severed because of both Delvile and his

father. Additionally, while Mrs. Harrel's company, though dissatisfying to Cecilia, is innocent enough, her connection to Mr. Harrel makes her friendship dangerous. The presence of men in the novel always puts an end to female society.[213]

Cecilia's inheritance also dismantles the possibility of *Millenium Hall*. Money makes Scott's female society happen. Each of the female founders have an inheritance that allows them to create their benevolent plan. Cecilia, of course, is also an heiress, but the largest portion of her money comes from her uncle and is accompanied with a clause that stipulates her husband will take her name. Critics have already explored the feminist potential of this detail in the plot of Burney's second novel, identifying it as an attempt to flout custom, to put the female in the position of power. However, when Dr. Lyster at the end of the novel cites Cecilia's uncle and the name clause as the beginning of her trouble, he is not far off. As Margaret Doody says, "Cecilia has been put (against her will) in the position of a pseudo-male: standing in for the patriarchal inheritor of name and social identity."[214] As such, Cecilia is forced to uphold a system she has very little connection to, and a name that means much less to her than it does, presumably, to her uncle and other male family members. It is, after all, the male portion of her name.

Ultimately, however, the name clause becomes antifeminist and anti-Millenium Hall because of what it implies about Cecilia's fate. Rather than endow her with power, the name clause identifies the destination of her inheritance. She will marry. And when

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[213] For a more in-depth approach to female friendships, see Carmen Maria Fernandez Rodriguez, "Frances Burney and Female Friendships: Some Notes on *Cecilia* and *The Wanderer*." *Journal of English Studies* 9 (2011): 109-123. Rodriguez argues that female friendships are where Burney negotiates the conflicted halves of eighteenth-century female identity: rebellion and submission. She claims that the competitive nature of female friendships in *Cecilia* (as opposed to the more harmonious ones in *The Wanderer*) is a direct reflection of Burney's perspectives on class and patriarchy and demonstrates Burney's inability to completely rectify rebellion and submission at that stage in her writing career.

[214] Margaret Doody. Introduction to *Cecilia*, eds., Peter Sabor and Margaret Doody (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), xvi.

she does, although his name will change, her husband will have the money. Her inheritance is not hers: it is an endowment designed for a husband, a debt or trust she carries for awhile in order to vouchsafe it back to the custody of patriarchal structures. As Keohane argues, from the outset of the novel, Cecilia is supposed to give her money away—she and society differ only in whether she should give it to a husband or to the poor.[215] Her charitable dream, where she imagines freeing the oppressed and raising the low, suggests that Cecilia at least dares to imagine that her money could be the key to her own political and social empowerment, the practice of which would be something similar to the female-run society of *Millenium Hall*, but the name clause and the patriarchal system she lives in say otherwise.

In addition to the fantasy of female inheritance, *Cecilia* suggests many charitable utopic schemes suffer from thoughtlessness about money. Burney's novel seems intent on proving Cecilia a poor manager of money, which results in her inability to create a functioning economic system like the women of *Millenium Hall* apparently did. This is one of the lessons the narrator claims she learns at the conclusion of the novel: "she had learnt the error of profusion, even in charity and beneficence" (939). This learning curve is shown most clearly when Cecilia is forced to abandon her estate because of the forfeited name clause. Concerned about the surrounding community, whom she had been supporting, she decides to visit them with the news of her departure:

> She soon, however, regretted that she had given herself this task; the affliction of these poor pensioners was clamorous, was almost heart-breaking; they could live, they said, no longer, they were ruined for ever; they should soon be without bread to eat, and they might cry for help in vain when their generous, their only benefactress was far away! . . . Nothing, however, could console them; they clung about her, almost took

[215] Keohane, "'Too Neat for a Beggar,'" 383.

> the horses from the chaise, and conjured her not to desert those who were solely cherished by her bounty!" (873)

As readers, we were not witness to this kind of distress prior to her beneficence, only here at its end. This suggests that her goodness has potentially caused more sadness than good. In fact, the pensioners' response almost descends into insurrection, as they consider attacking her means of transportation and preventing her from leaving. This scene demonstrates the failure of her pet project. As she spreads bounty around her, the objects of her charity come to depend on her. Her economic design is not self-supporting, but top-down, completely reliant on her presence, but can we blame Cecilia for this failure? She had no experience with the world. This is the same girl who was duped over and over by Mr. Harrel and required Mr. Monckton's assistance and advice repeatedly. Of course her means of managing money would be faulty. She had not been taught to handle it. So it is interesting, then, that Sarah Scott's heroines, equally heiresses and naïve, could somehow, automatically form an independent economic society. Cecilia's financial difficulties remind us that money management is entirely neglected in the scheme of Scott's novel. While her heroines have to learn other lessons to prove their fitness in that society (Lady Mary, for instance), money managing is never one of them. In all of these aspects, *Cecilia* argues that *Millenium Hall* dabbles in the realms of fantasy.

Once the reader has been disabused of the literary utopian impulse, it is worth noting that Cecilia harbors another dream apart from her benevolent plan that critiques Millenium Hall. Cecilia dreams of balance, of a golden mean. After her initial realization that a strict lifestyle formed around benevolence is impractical, we are told, "she resolved to soften her plan, and by mingling amusement with benevolence, to try, at least, to approach that golden mean, which, like the philosopher's stone, always eludes our grasp,

yet always invites our wishes" (131). This comment, by itself, is an indictment of Sarah Scott's extreme scheme. However, Cecilia recognizes it as possibly more difficult than strict benevolence. It is, in fact, something she recognizes as an utopian impulse from the outset: an unrealizable, yet worthy goal. It is interesting, then, that much of the layout of the novel mimics that balance. Delvile, for instance is described early on as perfectly balanced: "in the manners of young Delvile good breeding was so happily blended with frankness," (185). This is one of the details that identifies him as a suitable marriage partner for Cecilia, with whom, according to Miss Belfield, he creates perfect symmetry—and a different kind of balance. She says to Cecilia, "*You* only are like him! always gentle, always obliging!" (776). And although this claim to perfect symmetry is challenged in the novel, it is a sense of their rightness for each other that helps readers feel a completeness at the conclusion of the novel.

In fact, the novel employs balance in its structure. Everything gets duplicated in twos (that basic unit of symmetry) or threes (the more neoclassical equation for balance). Cecilia has three guardians and two inheritors. Burney does not just give us one mother that prefers her son to her daughter, but three. The relationship that Cecilia develops with Miss Belfield gets duplicated in the relationship between Cecilia and Mrs. Delvile by her own acknowledgement: "'What Henrietta Belfield is to me,' she cried, 'I am to Mrs. Delvile!'" (502). Again, Henrietta imagines herself in love with Delvile, and Cecilia is confused as Belfield's lover repeatedly, making the two women equally misconnected. Belfield serves as a foil for Monckton at the beginning, but later provides a useful coupling at different times with Albany and with Delvile. At the masquerade, Delvile and Monckton's disguises pit them as the opposites of each other. Later, Delvile proves

himself to be linked to Harrel: Harrel successfully robs Cecilia of her money and Delvile successfully robs her of her person (including her mind, as happens in the madness scene at the end of the novel). In the confrontation scene, three, rather than just two, people are involved. And, as the scene progresses, the passion shifts strategically from Delvile, to Cecilia, to his mother, whose passion is, finally, able to absolve theirs. Structurally, the novel begs its reader to look for these threes and twos, couplings and duplications, to search for the balance created within and among the host of characters, but ultimately, the real struggle for balance comes not in these pairings or the way Cecilia chooses to spend her time.

What Cecilia experiences with Delvile is a realization of the golden mean she aspired after at the beginning of the novel. However, as any reader of the novel knows, it is not exactly a *happy* medium. Because of their unique circumstances, Delvile and Cecilia are not only the perfect match because equally kind and obliging as Miss Belfield puts it, but they are also the perfect antidotes for each other. As Helen Thompson mentions, Cecilia finds and falls in love with the one person who does not want her money.[216] In other words, the two are a perfect balance of rightness and wrongness. In the ensuing internal battles that both Delvile and Cecilia experience, this rightness and wrongness become reinscribed as a conventional romance theme: the tension between love and duty. Delvile himself suggests the perfect balance between the two as he describes his struggle to Cecilia. "Duty, spirit, and fortitude," he says, "combating love, happiness and inclination,--each conquering alternately, and alternately each vanquished" (513). Here, he pits three nouns against three nouns. Additionally, the chiastic structure of his final phrase suggests the inverted, yet perfectly aligned character of the two

[216] Thompson, "Burney's Conservatism."

opposing motivations. This is Cecilia's golden mean, but it is a perfect balance that is hardly desirable.

The irreconcilable nature of duty and love force several of the plot elements that occur next. For one, as the antithesis to duty—those laws and restrictions laid down by reasonable society—Delvile and Cecilia's love is at odds with society. Instead of unfolding naturally, it is forced out in sometimes violent, but always disruptive, moments: the scalding tea at the assembly, the storm scene where Delvile and Cecilia are fleeing lightning, Mrs. Charlton's summer house where Cecilia is found articulating her desire to a dog, and later the confrontation scene where Mrs. Delvile bursts a blood vessel. In addition to these episodes, which make up some of the most talked-of parts of the book, their love drives Delvile's desire for a secret marriage, and the secret marriage, in both its attempts (again, the number two), propels the rest of the action. These are the incursive, transgressive episodes that help define romance.

The rest of the marriage plot, beginning with the first attempt at a secret marriage, draws our attention to that initial thematic concern of the novel: the social contract and the place of the female within it. In fact, it is worth pointing out that the drawn-out plot and the conclusion that does not end at marriage or at the couple's public coming out (in the form of the newspaper announcement that identifies Cecilia calling out the name Delvile) distinguishes this novel from *Evelina* and other conventional romances. Burney's novel ends with the rectification of their love with duty, their reestablishment as a couple within the social sphere. This ending was one that Burney insisted on in spite of complaints she received from readers. Her choice defied the novelistic balance that

readers expected, choosing instead a thematic balance, or more accurately what she considered a realistic balance.

In addition to showing the difficulty of reconciling such perfect opposites, the drawn-out marriage plot allows us to see how Delvile and Cecilia each deal with the impasse. The difference in their reactions argues that, as that initial conversation between Belfield and Monckton showed us, the female mind is not a free agent, and free will is the territory of men. In the process, it complicates the easy equation of Miss Belfield and Burney's earlier novel, *Evelina*, where the heroine and the hero, in their similarities, are simply perfect for each other. Cecilia and Delvile are not perfect for each other. They cannot be. One is a woman. While duty is the opposite of love for both Delvile and Cecilia, their indecision prior to, during, and after their marriage show that they are fundamentally different because they are answering to different laws. For example, as Delvile attempts to reason Cecilia through the decision to be married secretly, Cecilia responds:

> "And are these,' said Cecilia, 'considerations to set us free from our duty?"
> "No, but they are circumstances to relieve us from slavery. Let me not offend you if I am still more explicit. When no law, human or divine, can be injured by our union, when one motive of pride is all that can be opposed to a thousand motives of convenience and happiness, why should we both be made unhappy, merely lest that pride should lose its gratification?" (572-73)

Here, Cecilia is concerned about duty, those unspoken rules of society—a knowledge of which she displayed so aptly in her work with Albany. Delvile, on the other hand, is concerned about the absence of "slavery," or more broadly, religious laws (presumably set by God) and human laws (connected to their country). He is interacting with regulations at the God and country level, while Cecilia's concern is with rules of

propriety laid out by men like Delvile himself. He dismisses her concerns about duty and propriety as simply the offending of pride, but for him to do so is to ignore his own role in the construction of her system of morality. Again later, he tells his mother, "Religion and the laws of our country should then alone be consulted, and where those are neither opposed nor infringed, we should hold ourselves superior to all other considerations" (676). He is, of course, speaking Belfield's party line from the inaugural conversation about free will and conformity, but in neither case is he convincing to the women he speaks to. Mrs. Delvile calls his speech "mistaken notions" and self-flattery (676). Cecilia is initially only silenced by his claims, not convinced. When he reiterates them later on in the conversation, the narrator says, "her own hopes aided this reasoning," but that she agreed "Fearfully, indeed, and with unfeigned reluctance" (574). As the agreed-upon time for the marriage approaches, however, Cecilia is still unconvinced. Incidentally, this is the beginning of her symptoms of madness. Once he leaves her alone, and we are told, in an interesting passage,

> All that had passed for a while appeared a dream, her ideas were indistinct, her memory was confused, her faculties seemed all out of order, and she had but an imperfect consciousness either of the transaction in which she had just been engaged, or of the promise she had bound herself to fulfil: even truth from imagination she scarcely could separate; all was darkness and doubt, inquietude and disorder! (575-76)

While she pops out of this state of mind pretty quickly, the passage foreshadows things to come and, more importantly, suggests the cause of the later madness. The language is interesting. To begin with, we are told the plan seemed like a dream—something like the (utopian) dream she had of changing the world just before Mrs. Charlton died. However, the dream quickly morphs into confusion, darkness, doubt, and disorder. When she wakes from this mad reverie, she is "still further removed from tranquility" (576). Significantly,

it is her hope, not her reason, that agreed to the proposed marriage. In other words, it is Delvile's reasoning on which she is reliant, and not her own. The fact that her hope and his reason do not parallel her reason in this case is what sends her into inquietude and, for a brief moment, madness. It is this inability to believe Delvile and forego her own codes of duty that cause Cecilia to run out of the church during the first attempt. The second attempt at a secret marriage is more complicated, since Mrs. Delvile has agreed to it. Ironically, Cecilia has promised to be guided by Mrs. Delvile's decisions prior to her compliance with the marriage. In both cases, then, Cecilia agrees to be married—and is finally married—while being guided by someone else's reason. In the last case, Mrs. Delvile's opinion holds more weight, but still does not prevent Cecilia from suffering from the decision.

What happens next is a crash course in the difference between male versus female experience. Delvile is free to escape the threat of punishment, having risked breaking the country code to which he professed reverence before the marriage. Sequestered away in another country, he is free from the social consequences of being married but not named. Cecilia, who cannot leave because of her unique position as a female and the accompanying social requirement for companionship, becomes witness, alone, to the transfer of her estate. She is both forced to live the consequences of having a husband and expected to abide by the restrictive code of behavior for a single woman. This double set of codes further limits her possibilities. Ironically, it is while navigating the narrow passageway between these two sets of codes that Delvile finds her and applies these same social codes against her. No one should have understood her position more than him

since he was the one who placed her in it. Instead, he shows up acting more patriarchal than ever—in fact, having turned into a version of his father.

That Delvile has grown into his father is clear at his appearance at the Belfield's, and it is the similarity between this and the old Delvile's prior visit to the same residence that marks the resemblance. Cecilia hears him before she sees him, thundering out, "*You*, madam, may be content to listen here; pardon me if I am less humbly disposed!" (885). From his own admission here, Delvile suffers from the same trait with which he earlier convicted his father: pride. However, the connections are stronger than just that. For one, Mr. Delvile Senior's visit begins with an overheard conversation between him and Mrs. Belfield as well. In that visit, however, Mr. Delvile's voice is recognizable to Cecilia from the minute she hears it. Here, Delvile is not identified until he opens the door and Cecilia and Belfield are face to face with "young Delvile," the adjective delivered as if we need it to distinguish him from his father at this particular junction. Like his father, as soon as he sees Cecilia, he ceases to listen. For example, as the two stand at her chaise, Cecilia begging him to "come into the chaise, and let me speak and hear to be understood!" Delvile ignores her request and continues to grill her: "'where was it you had purposed to rest?' 'I don't know—I meant to go to Mrs. Hill's—I have no place taken.' — 'No place taken!' repeated he, in a voice faultering (stet) between passion and grief; 'you purposed, then, to stay here? —I have perhaps driven you away?'" (887). Not only does he refuse to satisfy her request to listen to her, but he refuses to believe the answers she gives him. She clearly tells him that she meant to go to Mrs. Hill's, but he refuses that possibility in favor of his own conclusion that she is being unfaithful.

This transformation, found in the similarity between the two visits, proves the validity of Cecilia's initial sense of right. What Delvile could dismiss so easily—the pride of his father—he has now officially inherited, perhaps because of his marriage. His actions here prove that he is part of that system of social duty to which she has and still does subscribe, and we see how much he cares about them, in spite of what he said earlier. This scene also suggests a bleak outcome for even the best matched pair. Delvile, who before this has been kind and obliging, a happy blend of good breeding and frankness, is still susceptible to the effects of patriarchal society. Evelina and Orville's best possible world is quickly darkening.

In fact, Cecilia's and Delvile's union here (which could only be called such in name, not in practice) is characterized by their inability to understand each other—and this from the two people who are the most alike. What comes next, for instance, Cecilia's madness, is precipitated by the same circumstances that accompanied the first symptoms of madness we saw earlier: the suspension of her reason in favor of his. In fact, the state of madness is both a literal plot event and a symbolic state—an almost heavy handed indication of the loss of her own reason. From this point in the novel until her madness comes on, Cecilia's actions are guided by an attempt to understand Delvile's thoughts. Over and over we hear her reasoning through what "he must think . . ." (889). And she does pretty well. She goes to the coffee-house, only to discover he has been and left. Then she goes to the Delvile home, only to discover he has been and left. She returns to the Belfield's, again just missing him, then back to the coffee-house. When she has come this far and is prevented from running down the street to him, she finally slips into madness.

This episode is not about how she *does not* think like him. It is about how she *cannot.* The multiplying obstacles she encounters at this particular juncture—tired horses, a drunk driver who insists on being paid, the loquacious Mr. Simkins, a man who tries to take advantage of her, gathering crowds—all remind us once again of the societal pressures that prevent her from acting like a man, Delvile, in spite of her demonstrated capacity to think like him. Because of who she is, because she is a woman, she has to think differently than a man. So duty says. Yet as the wife of her husband who is clearly not governing himself according to rational thought—or all of the relevant information—she is attempting to do so anyway. So says love. Here she is, literally caught in that perfect balance between two opposites, duty and love, and the price of that irreconcilable balance is reason and sanity. In spite of her relative success at getting inside Delvile's mind, thinking like him is still not thinking for herself, and in the absence of self-governance, she goes mad.

What Burney gains by stretching the plot out for so long is a more detailed picture of the female within the social contract. Cecilia remains in the public sphere longer than the heroine of an average courtship novel. What we learn from her extended stay is her paradoxical position—at a remove from society (the ward of men, or the wife of Delvile), yet always, necessarily, within it. While Delvile can interact immediately with the public sphere or escape it when it suits him, Cecilia must stay firmly entrenched within society always, paying due homage to societal mores. Delvile, unaccustomed to such strictures, forces her into undue distress and misunderstands her repeatedly. As her social contract, then, her connection to society, he makes a poor governor.

However, the extended plot benefits Delvile as well. It teaches his father his error in prejudice. When Dr. Lyster tricks Mr. Delvile Senior into witnessing Cecilia's madness, "The view of her distraction had dwelt upon his imagination, . . . He sent instantly for his son, . . . and felt his own peace restored as he pronounced forgiveness" (928). Cecilia's suffering begins to mend the errors in patriarchal structure, but she has to wear it inscribed on her face before it does any good.

Primarily, however, the enlarged plot tutors Delvile. It instructs him in the female perspective in order to fit him out as a suitable marriage partner. Cecilia's instruction begins early, even as they discuss the potential of a secret marriage. There, Delvile asks her to trust him implicitly in the decision. Her response:

> "Good heaven, what a request! Faith so implicit would be frenzy."
> "You doubt, then, my integrity? You suspect—"
> "Indeed I do not; yet in a case of such importance, what ought to guide me but my own reason, my own conscience, my own sense of right? Pain me not, therefore, with reproaches, distress me no more with entreaties." (631-32)

It is worth mentioning that Cecilia knows exactly what will follow exchanging her reason for his. She foretells precisely that frenzy with which the attempt to adopt his reasoning ends. He, however, does not listen. In fact, he assumes her refusal to employ his judgment is an insult. Only she recognizes the need for a separate code of conduct. He, like Belfield and Monckton at the beginning, is blind to the need for a separate set of assumptions for women. While his plan checks out with his own guidelines, hers—different and necessarily more strict—do not jibe with it. At her refusal to go along with his plan, he exclaims, "'O tyranny! . . . what submission is it you exact!'" (632). Interestingly, he accuses her of political oppression. While such a metaphor for unrequited love was cliché even in the eighteenth century, here it picks up the

associations with the discussions of the social contract with which the novel is laced. She is teaching him about the female perspective in order to better equip him for governing a wife, and his reaction to the female perspective is to impute to it tyranny and submission. Burney's novel would suggest he has gotten at least part of the message. He recognizes in female experience the tyranny and submission that has shaped it, he just does not realize this is the reality of the woman he loves.

He does, however, eventually get the message. Between marriage attempts, a repentant Delvile tells Cecilia, "I have persecuted where I ought in silence to have submitted; . . . In the vehemence with which I have pursued you, I have censured that very dignity of conduct which has been the basis of my admiration, my esteem, my devotion!" (684). The greatest lesson, however, is learned during her madness when Cecilia, looking at Delvile, says "'I thought you had been Mr. Monckton yourself'" (906). Delvile replies, "'Too cruel, yet justly cruel Cecilia!'" (906). His willingness to accept censure that is not delivered as such indicates he has intuited the right message. Not only does the name censure him with the villainy of Monckton, but also with Monckton's position early on, in the conversation between him and Belfield. There, Monckton speaks in the voice of society and convention. Delvile deserves the name Monckton because he has been guilty of thrusting the same party line on Cecilia, enforcing rules on her that he once claimed to eschew, and now he knows it and what it has done to her. The final description of Delvile at the conclusion of the book tells us he "saw with wonder the virtues of her mind" (940). This indicates that Delvile's lessons are complete, that he has become a different kind of governor. The mind he once attempted to force and almost destroyed is now unfolding in its "excellencies" to him.

Burney's decision to relocate the marriage in the middle as part of the conventional adventures of romance and separate it from the resolution suggests that while marriage is the reality of women, it is not the solution. Neither is finding the best possible man the solution. All men, the novel seems to argue, even the best, must be witness to female experience and its separate rules in order to be fit governors. By extending the plot until this conclusion is eked out, Burney is making us, at least, witness to that fact. We see the extent of the difficulties such a conclusion required.

Romance is the perfect vessel for this realization. Scholars have called romance an incursive, transgressive strategy that intrudes on society.[217] More about movement than stasis, romance pits itself, not as order, but as its antithesis; not as society, but as a move away from society. At the same time, romance is still an idyllic dream (Cecilia's dream of freeing the oppressed; later, her dream of being happily married to Delvile). Black sees romance as "the site where such residual values [not found in society] go to live out their half-lives as nostalgic dreams," a genre that generates readerly desire (for movement, adventure, love) and then contains it in conventional forms.[218] In other words, romance by itself suggests that society is flawed. The genre serves to remind its readers of the imperfections they would otherwise overlook. The romance elements of *Cecilia* force us to see these flaws, but instead of containing our desire, their reorganization in the novel suggests a compromise between romance and reality by the end.

Cecilia's argument about the female position within the public sphere is also an argument about the precarious nature of the female author's place in the public arena. The fact that, unlike Belfield and Albany, Cecilia must stay firmly connected to society is

[217] Fuchs, *Romance*, 50.
[218] Black, "Romance Redidivus," n.p.

not simply an argument about female delicacy; it is a commentary on female authorship. *Cecilia* argues that the female novelist does not have the luxury of wandering through romance or utopia. The female author must stay within society, must work with the tools society has given her rather than inventing new ones.

Not only is this a critique of Sarah Scott's work, it is also a condemnation of the utopic nature of female-authored romances that imagine a culminating ideal union. Cecilia and Delvile, for instance, while being the most alike and, presumably, the most likely to find bliss, find themselves unable to think like each other and ultimately form only an average existence together. This is the ending that Burney insisted on in the face of complaints such as Edmund Burke's, who said the ending should be either happier or more tragic "for in a work of imagination . . . there is no medium."[219] To Daddy Crisp, she defended the ending, saying "if I am made to give up this point, my whole plan is rendered abortive, and the last page of any novel in Mr Noble's circulating library may serve for the last page of mine."[220] This argument can also be located in the search for the golden mean employed in the novel. Cecilia and Delvile are not simple syllogisms of each other. Instead, what they lack in understanding, the novel makes up for in its structure. The romance plot, as Martha Brown has argued, often centers on a female who enters the world to be taught about its precepts. This novel, by paralyzing its heroine in madness, casts the male within society as the one learning about the female who has finally entered it. In other words, the end of Burney's novel reverses the trajectory of romance laid out at the first. It is this plot reversal that makes their union both plausible

[219] Edmund Burke to Frances Burney, in *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, ed. Charlotte Barrett, 7 vols. (London, 1842-46), 2:159. Cited in Doody, Introduction to *Cecilia*, xxxvii.
[220] Frances Burney to Daddy Crisp, 6 April 1782, in *Diary and Letters*, 2: 107-8. Cited in Doody, Introduction to *Cecilia*, xxxviii.

and pleasant. It is what finally shapes Delvile into a suitable match for Cecilia. This is the balance that Burney's second novel argues marks the difference between the novel and romance, realistic fiction and products of the fancy, and it demonstrates the paradoxical role of the female author: at a remove from society, and therefore absolutely required to stay within it.

Coda: The Wanderer

Burney's last novel, *The Wanderer*, continues the trajectory that begins in *Cecilia*. It starts by further widening the gap between marriage and conclusion. Juliet is married at the beginning. The revelation of that marriage occurs somewhere near the late middle. Of course, she always has Harleigh waiting in the wings ready to claim his conventional romance ending, but Harleigh is only marginally interesting as a leading man.

The novel, in fact, focuses much of its energy on another man, Sir Jaspar Herrington, who does much of what a hero should do in a conventional romance. It is Jaspar, not Harleigh who first knows her story and her marriage. At the crisis of Juliet's story when she stands faced with her husband and accuser, Harleigh stands paralyzed. It is Sir Jaspar who delivers her from danger. An aged bachelor, would-be seducer, and firmly entrenched member of the patriarchal and aristocratic power systems, Sir Jaspar does not replace Harleigh, but supersedes him.

Again, this departure from conventional romance has thematic implications for female empowerment. It further separates marriage from its partner associations of liberation or voice. Instead, it suggests a need for the British government—not just the husband—to witness female experience. Sir Jaspar can easily be associated with Edmund

Burke, prominent eighteenth-century British statesman. After delivering Juliet from her husband, Jaspar takes her, first, to Wilton and then to Stonehenge. Both are representations of ancient Britishness—its aristocracy and its cultural and supernatural heritage. However, they are also representations of, respectively, the beautiful and the sublime, as Burke defines them in his treatise on aesthetic philosophy.[221] Additionally, the imps that characterize every conversation he has with Juliet are the literary equivalent of the imps or demons with which Burke was associated in political cartoons of the day.[222] These imps were representations of his flair for the dramatic.[223] After his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* was published, Burke was also fitted out in cartoons with a full suit of armor, further demonstrating the chivalry and romance that the British public was beginning to associate with the British statesman.[224]

Unfortunately, that is just what Sir Jaspar's rescue turns into: his own romance. Instead of taking her to safety, he conducts her to places that represent his power, stopping at Stonehenge to generate his own story about her and his rescue. The imps, for

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[221] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful,* ed., David Womersley (London: Penguin, 1998). Burke names Stonehenge as an example of the sublime because of its difficulty to construct.

[222] *Cincinnatus in Retirement*, for instance, by James Gillray, published by Elizabeth D'Archery in 1782 shows Burke sitting at his front table eating a baked potato out of a chamber pot while three imps dance at his feet. A lot of imps and demons showed up during the trial of Warren Hastings. The following illustration, for example, shows Burke at the foot of Hastings' death bed holding a cross. Four demons/imps each hold up a different means of execution up for Hastings to choose from. William Dent. *No Abatement*. Publ. 31 May 1791, by W. Dent. Prints found in Nicholas K. Robinson, *Edmund Burke: A Life in Caricature*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996), 40, 111. Very few writers have treated the imps in Burney's novel. The two who have, Margaret Doody, *Frances Burney: The Life in the Works*, and Kristina Straub, *Divided Fictions*, connect them to the sylphs of Pope's *Rape of the Lock*. However, Sir Jaspar never calls them sylphs. I believe that association is a stretch.

[223] Burney, herself, ascribed this flair for the dramatic to Burke's Irishness. In her *Memoirs of Doctor Burney,* she described Burke at a dinner party in a frenzy, exclaiming with undue vehemence, "Monarchs are Necessary!" "we must preserve Monarchs!" Of his failings she writes, "I am persuaded that the two fatal transgressions which despoiled him of the supremacy of his perfection were both the wayward produce of that unaccountable and inexplicable occasional warp, which, in some or other unexpected instance, is sooner or later, to betray an Hibernian origin; even in the most transcendent geniuses which spring from the land of Erin." Burney, *Memoirs of Doctor Burney*, 161, 164.

[224] Robinson, *Edmund Burke: A Life,* 141-47.

instance, multiply out of control at Stonehenge, suggesting he experiences there a kind of climax of British romance, doing what Black argues romance does: generate desire (though failing to contain it). This produces in turn a similar interpretation of the British statesman as Mike Goode's, who says that Burke historicizes male sentiment and sexual feeling—eroticizing not women, but history, and establishing feeling as law.[225] All the while, he is blind to what Juliet feels, wants, and needs. Unlike Delvile, Sir Jaspar never experiences a learning curve. He lives out the rest of the novel blissfully lost in his own romance.

While *The Wanderer* suggests the need for a witness of and arbiter for female experience on the national level, it presents a much darker outlook on the potential for it than *Cecilia* does on the spousal level. In keeping with this dark presentation, *The Wanderer* launches another extension of its argument about the female author. While *Cecilia* attempts to thematize the problems of the female author, *The Wanderer* suggests that the problem of writing lies with the reader.

With the book as the only other potential witness of female experience, Burney's final novel is an attempt to tutor the British public in how to read appropriately. Juliet is different. She is a true wanderer, as the title indicates. Part of Cecilia's problem, by contrast, is that she *has* ties to society—her guardians. Evelina and Camilla are escorted

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[225] Mike Goode, "The Man of Feeling History: The Erotics of Historicism in Reflections on the Revolution in France," *ELH* 74 no. 4 (2007): 829-857. Goode provides a useful review of Burke reception, indicating that the sentimental Burke has been a more recent development. Previous preoccupations include Burke as pragmatist, whether Burke is truly conservative, Burke as utilitarian and Burke as natural-law thinker. As Goode indicates, the "tale of sorrow" passage has been fundamental to Burke as sentimentalist since 1968. Claudia Johnson sees it as "the most widely known sentimental tableau in the 1790s," (ftnt. 10, p. 854); Paul Hindson, Tim Gray and Tom Furniss all see it as the key scene in understanding Burkean politics. Claudia Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 2-14. Paul Hindson and Tim Gray, *Burke's Dramatic Theory of Politics* (Aldershot: Avebury, 1988). Tom Furniss, "Stripping the Queen: Edmund Burke's Magic Lantern Show," in *Burke and the French Revolution: Bicentennial Essays*, ed., Steven Blakemore (Athens, GA: Georgia University Press, 1992), 69-96.

into society under the wing of protectors. Juliet is not and does not. She has to seek out connections. In this sense, she is more of a romance heroine than the others were, and, for the bulk of the novel, that is all she seems to be. Not only does Burney create a heroine detached from British society, she is also detached from her readers. We participate with the characters in not knowing her name, her story, her status, her yearnings. She has no guardians connecting her to them, and a narrator that does little to connect her to us. Burney is clearly not trying to create a heroine with whom people can identify.

Instead, she seems bent on teaching us how to read her. If we share the same detachment from Juliet that the other characters do, then we have the potential to do the same things with her they do. Juliet is, as Andrea Henderson has argued, "a visitor from the glamorous world of romance" to the characters she encounters.[226] She is a meta-romance, a romance within a novel. More accurately, she is the temptation of romance. In this novel, Burney shows the characters' prejudices, their attempts to use Juliet to their own ends. Those characters' readings of Juliet become models for how we should not read. Primarily, the warning is not to make a romance out of her. Burney wants us not to use her novels to generate our own desires as Sir Jaspar does, or, in the face of their fictionality, to fail to see their realism, as Brown does.

[226] Andrea Henderson, "Burney's *The Wanderer* and Early-Nineteenth-Century Commodity Fetishism," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 57, no. 1 (June 2002): 29.

CHARLOTTE LENNOX, *THE LIFE OF HARRIOT STUART*, AND *EUPHEMIA*

Given the debate lingering over generic interplay and the degree of female empowerment it offers in Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752), it is surprising that few critics have had a similar interest in the gender and genre entanglements of Lennox's other novels. While those critics who have written about *The Life of Harriot Stuart, Written by Herself* (1751) and *Euphemia* (1790), Lennox's first and last novels, often approach them through gender, very few link gender to Lennox's generic strategies, and only one mentions romance. More often, critics focus on Lennox's depiction of the New World and the autobiographical elements in the two texts. I would argue, however, that, as in *The Female Quixote*, Lennox employs romance as a strategy in the two novels that bookend her writing career in order to experiment with the potential for increased female agency in eighteenth-century Britain. Her fiction, put together, indicates that female empowerment was a life-long concern for her. Temma F. Berg claims Lennox's particular answer for woman in these novels is that "she can only depend on a woman; while romantic love is illusory and ephemeral, female friendship endures."[227] I will argue in this chapter that a careful look at Lennox's strategic use of romance suggests that female friendship is not her solution for female agency.

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[227] Temma F. Berg, "Getting the Mother's Story Right: Charlotte Lennox and the New World," *Papers on Language and Literature: A Journal for Scholars and Critics of Language and Literature* 32, no. 4 (Fall 1996): 372, 370.

Like the other authors I have included in this survey, Lennox critiques female society as a means for female agency. Instead, women who want agency, she argues, require a male agent. In *The Life of Harriot Stuart*, she elicits this argument by replacing her heroine's strategy for female agency—coquetry and romance—with an ideal romance hero whose function is not to marry her, but to facilitate her wishes. Thirty-nine years later, in *Euphemia*, Lennox provides an addendum to her original claim while participating in the same project. She demystifies the improbable idealism of her first male agent by acquainting us with his mother. Her final novel suggests that women must raise their own male agent who can carry their trace out into the world.

Both novels, like the writings of the other women in this study, suggest a mitigated position of agency for the British female, something similar to what Helen Thompson finds in *The Female Quixote*: "neither free nor constrained, but both."[228] In part, this is figured by the hybridity of their texts. In Lennox's first novel, romance self-consciously self-destructs. Additionally, *The Life of Harriot Stuart* delivers autobiography along with romance that allows the generic interaction of the two to comment on authorial agency as well. In *Euphemia*, romance makes incursions into what most identify as the affected realism of an epistolary novel.

My discussion of the above argument is divided into three sections. In the first and longest section of this chapter, I will discuss Harriot's model of heroism and her choice of romance as a place of resistance against social restrictions. After demonstrating Harriot's realizations about genre along her journey, I will discuss Mr. Campbel as Lennox's replacement for romance and female empowerment. In the second section, I

[228] Helen Thompson, "Charlotte Lennox and the Agency of Romance," *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* 43, no. 2 (2002): 107.

will show how Harriot's strategies for increased agency mirror Lennox's use of romance to gain authorial agency. Finally, in a brief coda, I will consider the addendum Lennox makes to her original thesis in her final novel. There she demystifies the male agent and romance hero of Harriot's story by arguing that women must shape their own agent. In mothering her own agent, Euphemia is belatedly gifted with that which Harriot begins her story: a sense of wish-fulfillment and the potential for a utopian perspective.

First, though, because both of these novels are under-read and unknown, I will briefly summarize their somewhat complex plots. *The Life of Harriot Stuart* begins with Harriot who, at a young age, travels with her family to America. On the way, she meets Dumont, a young man with a mysterious past, for whom she harbors a budding passion. Her parents, however, prefer a Mr. Maynard who pushes his suit with her, but whom Harriot detests. In America, Harriot garners the attention of the governor's son, Captain Belmein. He saves her from her wedding to Mr. Maynard by abducting her. She escapes. When her father dies, her mother sends her back to England to live with an aunt. On the way back to England, her ship is captured by a Spanish fleet. The Spanish fleet is, in return, captured by an English ship. On board this ship, the captain tries to rape her, and his nephew Mr. Campbel, declares himself and becomes her friend and protector. When she arrives in England, Harriot finds her aunt has gone mad and removed to the country. Lady Cecilia and her sister take her under their wing, but while Harriot stays at the sister's place, a spurned lover casts aspersions on Harriot and she is turned out. Dumont then appears and the two make plans to marry, but Dumont disappears and Harriot is kidnapped by his uncle and installed at a French convent. There, she charms a male visitor who rescues her, only with designs to make her his new mistress. She escapes with

the help of his current mistress. Harriot returns to England and is reunited with her mother, sisters, and Mr. Campbel. In Dumont's absence, she makes plans to marry Mr. Campbel until Dumont reappears and he and Harriot are happily wed.

Euphemia has two protagonists who narrate their stories to each other. Maria, Euphemia's correspondent, tells a traditional courtship plot through the course of her letters. Euphemia's story, however, begins with the death of her father and the dissolution of her family's wealth and status. As her mother ails from the effects of such a blow, Euphemia meets Mr. Neville who charms her mother. Because it is the express wish of her mother, Euphemia marries Mr. Neville. Afterward, Euphemia discovers that Mr. Neville's finances are in arrears and he makes plans to move to New York while Euphemia's mother continues to ail. Her mother passes away, and Euphemia travels with her husband to the New World. On the way, and throughout her time there, she records the people, behavior, cultures, and customs she encounters. After a frightening encounter with Indians, Euphemia gives birth to a son with a bow and arrow birthmark on his chest. Later, this son is lost on an excursion to Cahoe Falls. Euphemia gives birth to a daughter. Word reaches Mr. Neville that his uncle has passed away and they can return to England, but Euphemia is prevented from going with him by the sickness of her former governess and female companion, Mrs. Benson. During Mrs. Benson's recovery Euphemia's now grown son is returned to her, and she travels home to England with both her children and plans to reunite with Maria.

The Great Pretender: Harriot Stuart

The Life of Harriot Stuart, Written by Herself bears all the markings of a generically standard romance. It employs the same conventions Martha Brown uses to categorize Frances Burney's novels as romances. Like *Evelina*, Burney's admittedly standard romance, Lennox's first novel features "a heroine who is poised at the threshold of initiation into experience, who is ready to undergo the symbolic *rite de passage*, which involves testing and self-discovery."[229] Harriot, like Evelina, "suffers a series of trials in which she falls prey to an assortment of villainous males who attack her virtue, or her heart."[230] Her story takes the shape of a "quest for identity ending in the self-recognition so central to romance," and the narrative concludes with a marriage, as do other traditional romances.[231] Like Burney's, *The Life of Harriot Stuart* stresses dependence, a traditional romance theme, as Brown also points out. It adds to Burney's conventional romance, travels to and through exotic places—the new world, a French convent, a sea voyage—an additional conventional element of romance.

It is striking, then, that none of the, granted, few critics who have written about *The Life of Harriot Stuart* have called it a romance. The closest is Temma F. Berg, who says the novel "uses the conventions of romance," but otherwise claims it is defined by the "paratactic shapelessness of the picaresque novel."[232] Eve Tavor Bannet, instead of identifying it as romance, calls it "a roman-a-clef, which shares its convoluted and improbable plotting, its love in excess, and its honesty about female desire with the early

[229] Brown, "Fanny Burney's 'Feminism,'" 32.
[230] Ibid., 29.
[231] Ibid., 31.
[232] Berg, "Getting the Mother's Story Right," 372, 370.

Haywood."[233] She joins Jennie Batchelor, who links it with early eighteenth-century female amatory fiction, a title often attributed to the work of Eliza Haywood, Aphra Behn, and Delarivier Manley.[234] It is worth noting, however, that linking *Harriot Stuart* to amatory fiction *is* allying it with romance. As Kathryn King mentions, the female amatory tradition is a subgenre of fiction invented by feminist historiographers to, among other things, make credible writing that had received little serious attention.[235] However, the female triumvirate owes the "convoluted and improbable plotting" and "love in excess" of their stories to romance. Additionally, Susan K. Howard, whose primary concern is Lennox's deployment of the Indian captivity narrative, is addressing a particularized version of a romance trope.[236] These comments on the structure of Lennox's first novel are really so many ways of saying her book is romance.

There are two reasons why these writers may have elided the novel's most obvious debt. One is the influential story of the rise of the novel that casts romance as the foil for healthy fiction. Another more likely reason in this case, however, is the novel's few deviations from romance. The most egregious deviation is Harriot herself. Lennox staffs her generically standard romance with a nonstandard heroine. Harriot, unlike Evelina, is bold, unafraid, and game for experience, professing at the beginning of her life an understanding of people and the world. She is subject to the same depredations and dependence as Burney's heroine, and she is equally naïve, but her naivety manifests itself as a mistaken form of knowing what it means to be a woman in the world and the means

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[233] Eve Tavor Bannet, "The Theater of Politeness in Charlotte Lennox's British-American Novels," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 33, no. 1 (Fall): 75.
[234] Batchelor, "The 'latent seeds of coquetry,'" 150.
[235] Kathryn King, "Female Agency and Feminocentric Romance," *The Eighteenth Century* 41, no. 1 (2000): 56-57.
[236] Susan Kubica Howard, "Identifying the Criminal in Charlotte Lennox's *The Life of Harriot Stuart*," *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 5, no. 2 (Jan. 1993): 137-52.

of power available to her. The model of heroism she presents, then, is not the traditional heroine of romance, nor its mid- to late eighteenth-century domestic reincarnation: the passive, self-sacrificing, and passionless woman. Additionally, as I will argue later on, *Harriot Stuart*'s ending is also unconventional. Brown notes, for instance, that every Burney heroine has "her chivalrous knight to protect her" (35). Harriot has one as well, but she does not marry hers. She marries an effeminate man who has been absent for much of the narrative and has left Harriot to fend for herself.

In fact, I would argue that while romance tropes, themes, and plot patterns subsume much of the narrative of *The Life of Harriot Stuart*, it is more accurate to conceive of the novel as engaging with romance rather than being one. The use of romance allows Lennox to comment on woman's potential for agency through her character Harriot. Lennox's perspective on the potential for female empowerment in eighteenth-century society at this point in her writing career is both positive and limited. Her uncanny protagonist provides readers with what many critics have called a new female identity, but the novel's working out at the end suggests a new feminine identity is not enough. Lennox also gives Harriot a male agent—Mr. Campbel—to do for her what a woman, even a woman like Harriot, cannot do. This suggests that such a male accessary is necessary for fully realized female agency. Additionally, Lennox combines romance in this novel with autobiography—or, more accurately, implied autobiography—suggesting that Harriot reflects on Lennox's position as writer seeking agency in a publishing world granting increasing access to women.

Romance is a choice in *Harriot Stuart*. It is not so much Lennox's choice (though, granted, she is at the bottom of it) but Harriot's. By her own admission, Harriot adopts

romance as a way of acting at a young age. Suitably, she launches her career of performing romance at a theater where she makes her first male conquest and is rescued by him from a fire. She suggests this adventure is the result of her own artifice. "I had all the coquet inclinations of fifteen;" she says, "and not only knew the full value of a smile, a sigh, or a blush, but could practise them all upon occasion" (66). [237] She links this artificial performance with romance when she says, reflecting on the event afterward, "I compared my adventure with some of those I had read in novels and romances, and found it full as surprising. In short, I was nothing less than a Clelia or Statira" (66). Her comment here suggests that in putting on those smiles, sighs, and blushes that elicited the events that followed, she was performing a specific female role, an identity adopted from romance. She was, she says, a Clelia or Statira. In fact, she clinches the role of female romance heroine by writing, as she says, "to my female friend, whom I called Sylvia; and, in a truly romantic style, relat[ing] the whole adventure" (66).

Harriot makes it clear that this performance of romance is, for her, a ticket to increased agency, or power. She says after relating her thoughts on the adventure and linking herself to Madame de Scudery's heroines, "These reflections had such an effect on my looks and air next day, that it was very visible I thought myself of prodigious importance" (66). This increased sense of importance certainly is a product of the influence she exerted over Lord S—, the boy who escorted her from the burning theater, but it seems to have even more to do with the position within romance that she is mimicking, since it directly follows her mention of Clelia and Statira. She does, after all, say it was the reflections that effected the change in her looks, rather than the experience

[237] All references to *The Life of Harriot Stuart, Written by Herself* are to Charlotte Lennox, *The Life of Harriot Stuart, Written by Herself,* ed., Susan Kubica Howard (ND: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995).

itself. The heightened self-importance Harriot experiences develops from the realization that she was performing the role of protagonist. As a protagonist, the top level of literary character hierarchy, she envisions a narrative that centers around her.

She imagines herself at the helm of her own story, in control of where it takes her. Significantly, in the above passage, she takes responsibility for the adventure that has just occurred. She refers to it as "my adventure," even though there were many other people involved (the boys, for instance, who threw the rocks that started the fire). In doing so, she is imagining she has the capacity to make plot. Claiming the story as hers may seem a form of delusion, considering the boys are the ones who compel the adventure. The adventure itself is located in the fire started by the boys and the escape from the theater which Lord S— undertakes. In both cases, it is (little) men who act and compel movement. She is, however, rescripting agency. While movement and action resides with the men in this episode, she can still take credit for masterminding it. She is the one who garners Lord S—'s attentions. It is, presumably, her conquest of Lord S— that Harriot has to thank for her rescue from the burning theater. This is what, ultimately, compels his actions. The fact that she did this before the threat of fire suggests a prior understanding of men's or boys' nature. Boys will be boys, her actions seem to suggest; therefore, I must be prepared for every contingency. While she is not the active element of her story, she is its brains. This is emphasized in her sentence structure when she says "I suffered him to take me in his arms" (66). He does not take her and carry her off. She allows him to. She is the agency that wills action.

But it is also the *kind* of heroine, illustrated by the kind of story these heroines generate, that elevates her in her mind. She moves straight from "my adventure" was

"full as surprising," to "[i]n short, I was . . . a Clelia" (66). Her transition suggests that it is the surprising nature of her story that elevates her. Clelia and Statira are not just any protagonists, they are protagonists of unrealistic, improbable stories. Clelia and Statira generate these extraordinary, above average events, and that translates to above average, extraordinary, surprising agency. As "surprising" as her adventure and their plotlines are, they hold the potential for difference—something other than what she knows as reality. This is the import of romance for Harriot: that a protagonist's feminine wiles have the power to impel entire plotlines that stray from everyday life. The genre is a vehicle for the realization of her wish for a new, "prodigious" female role, and the genre's surprising, fantastical elements signify the degree of power she aims for.

Furthermore, performing romance *does* merit her increased, often subversive agency. The scene where Harriot meets Dumont reminds us again of her performative role in its associations with the theater. The two perform a drama together, Otway's 1680 tragedy *The Orphan*. It is also her first encounter with the man she will marry. During the performance, she reads the female parts and Dumont, the male. While Harriot reads all the women's parts, the response to the performance only mentions her in the role of Monimia. Likewise, Dumont is identified only as Castalio even though he, theoretically, also reads the parts of Polydore (the twin who provides the tragic element of the play) and the twins' father. In other words, the response to the reading recasts Harriot's and Dumont's performance as a romance. Not only does the rescripting of this tragedy as romance link the two as a potential couple, their performance of it identifies them as an appropriate match: two actors perfectly matched in their expression of sentiment. The reader can see this suitability in Harriot's effusive commentary on Dumont: "There was

such a mixture of sweetness and sensibility in his countenance, such inchanting loveliness in his eyes, so many nameless graces in his mien" (68). This pairs the emotion she sees in him and describes here with her own emotional prose, a match that recognizes their rightness for each other.

However, while this scene is coded for the readers with the import of the subtext: Harriot and Dumont's encounter and attraction, the performance allows that attraction to remain covert to the others present. The play, in fact, provides an artificial context to contain the "earnest and sparkling glances" (69), "involuntary motion[s]" (68), and "confusion" (69) that constitute what is Harriot and Dumont's sincere response to each other. This is a sincere response that cannot be openly expressed by either at the time. Harriot cannot because of the rules of decorum and female decency enforced particularly by her mother, who is present; Dumont cannot because he is at the moment promised to another woman. The performance of romance, then, allows them to get around codes and restrictions to participate in earnest, but socially transgressive behavior. Being able to act without restriction is that greater degree of agency Harriot dreams of. Ultimately, this scene suggests performing romance is a successful strategy for her.

Romance, then, is a position of resistance for Harriot. That is illustrated, again, when Harriot similarly performs romance. This time she does so with her writing, a venue that adopts romance as a position of identification again, this time in a way that collapses heroine with author. It is while writing "Sylvia . . . in a truly romantic style," that "an involuntary impulse made [Harriot] throw [her] thoughts into verse" (66). Here, she is both performing the romance position of heroine who shares her deepest thoughts with her female friend, but also performing romance author, penning poetry that is, by

her own definition, romantic. Later, she exploits this same position in her interaction with Dumont. Like the Otway scene, Dumont and Harriot engage in an interactive performance, this time using music and poetry rather than drama. Like the Otway scene, the positions of identity provided by the scripts they use or write allow them to express illicit sentiment to each other. Dumont sings, but he "chose some very passionate lines; and his eyes, while he was singing, were often fixed with a soft languishment on [Harriot]" (69). In return, Harriot writes, but her poetry describes "the soft touch of his harmonious hand," and "a voice so sweet as thine," that blessed "ravish'd senses" (69). Later she adds "To kindred harmony my thoughts aspire:/But what I must not praise, I'll silently admire" (70). These are the two lines that Dumont passes back to her in response. That these lines can be employed both directions again suggests to the reader Harriot and Dumont's fitness for each other, and again, because they are performing not just art forms, but positions within art that their audience recognizes as artificial, this expression of their earnest sentiment passes under the radar of social codes and the awareness those present. The fact that Harriot writes her own romance script here gives her even more agency than in the other two performances.

However, that agency is contingent on reading people accurately—particularly in reading their emotion. Her admission of skill in coquetry preceding the first episode, that she could blush and sigh on command, is an implicit profession of her ability to understand men, to know when they need a sigh or a blush or a smile. The success of that particular conquest implies her successful intuition of Lord S—'s desire, as well as her delivery of a convincing performance. In the Otway episode, as Dumont points out, it is not just her particular graces that make Harriot's performance successful, but "her

judgment, by which she gave so exactly the true sense and spirit of the poet" (69). Her implicit understanding of this writer's emotion, sentiment, or intention participates in the same skillset that made her successful with Lord S—. In the final episode, the culminating event following their dramatic reading, Harriot's poetry is a transcription of Dumont's desire. It is her version of what she thinks she sees in his eyes during his acting and his solo. The fact that he returns the lines to her suggests that she has accurately read his emotion.

In fact, coquetry, that skillset that she employs to access her romantic adventures throughout her tale, is, for Harriot, a logical study of human emotion. In "The Trifler," from *The Lady's Museum*, Lennox describes a coquette as someone whose "predominant passion," is "the desire of pleasing." She then adds, "the distinguishing characteristic of a coquet is to use her powers of pleasing to the ungenerous purpose of giving pain."[238] The coquette, then, elicits emotion: first pleasure followed by pain. Ironically, the eliciting of these emotions is followed by the coquette's experience of emotion: vanity, an emotion that elevates her in her own mind. However, while the coquette was by Lennox and others most often caricatured as an empty-headed female with little substance, *this* coquette demonstrates an early penchant for learning. Lennox takes pains to include Harriot's education in her history, notes that she is well-read and was raised on the improving literature and morality her brother dictated. She also develops an early skill at writing. Both of these details separate her from those coquettes satirized by Lennox in "The Trifler" who have built an existence around "the extinction of all reasonable ideas," and for whom "it is sufficient . . . [to] appear of consequence in the eyes of the world."[239]

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[238] Charlotte Lennox, "The Trifler," *The Lady's Museum*. no. 1.
[239] Charlotte Lennox, "The Trifler," *The Lady's Museum*, no. 8.

Jennie Batchelor reclaims the coquette as a reasonable being. She argues that the coquette's activities are designed to transform herself from an object to a subject, but indicates that such an ability must spring from a full understanding of her own status as object.[240] In other words, the coquette's actions are the product of a lot of introspection about herself and the world around her. While such a claim may be specious for coquettes in general, it certainly applies to the educated and astute Harriot who successfully navigates the above episodes. Coquettish behavior allows her to generate and star in adventures, plots authored by the sentiment she produces, and that narrative, romance, opens up a space with new possibilities for her. Coquetry is Harriot's ability to use sentiment logically and strategically to generate new, surprising, fantastic possibilities.[241]

In fact, this is what identifies Harriot as a new type of heroine.[242] Her use of sentiment separates her from the passive and self-sacrificing Clarissa Harlowes available at midcentury, the novelistic models of feminine conduct characterized by restraint. Critics describe Harriot as "intelligent, quick-witted, and assertive," with "a strong instinct for self-preservation."[243] All this is true, but importantly, her intelligence and quick wit lead her to an estimation of the value of emotion. As a result, Harriot does not fall into romance, she chooses it. It is her investment in emotion as a strategy for empowerment. Her poetry also demonstrates her investment in sentiment. She tells us her poetry is known as "so tender and passionate" (66). Additionally, the description she

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[240] Jennie Batchelor, "The 'latent seeds of coquetry'," 145-164.
[241] In fact, such an admission is made by Lennox's "coquette" in The Trifler who ungenders the position of coquette by claiming to use the same skill applied by businessmen and statesmen.
[242] Philippe Sejourne calls her "un nouveau type d'heroine" in *Aspects Generaux du Roman Feminine en Angleterre de 1740 a 1800* (Aix-in-Provence: Publications Des Annales De La Faculte Des Lettres, n.s. 52, 1966), 140. Howard,"Identifying the Criminal,"151-52, and Susan Carlile, "Expanding the Feminine: Reconsidering Charlotte Lennox's Age and The Life of Harriot Stuart." *The Eighteenth-Century Novel* 4 (2004): 115 also make the argument that Harriot Stuart is a new model of heroine.
[243] Howard, "Identifying the Criminal," 151. Also addressed in Carlile, "Expanding the Feminine,"115.

provides of her writing process intimates Wordsworth's much later "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings."[244] She says an "involuntary impulse made her throw her thoughts into verse" (66). This is hardly a model for the careful crafting of neoclassical poetry. Instead it is messy, impelled by something within her—presumably the passion that comes to define her lines. Ironically, her writing endeavors result in her experience of the same emotion as her coquetry: vanity: "my poetry procured me the name of Sappho, a distinction which agreeably soothed my vanity" (66). Like her coquetry, her writing elicits emotion in others and comes back to her as praise, which translates into vanity. And this is only her first attempt. Based on the positive results she experiences from her writing here, Harriot repeats the process, writing often, and she tells us she "took so much delight in writing" (66), presumably because of the boost it gave her vanity. It is worth noticing, however, that while Harriot writes with her own passions, using "a heart so formed to receive tender impressions" (64), her poetry allows her to use that real passion as artifice to elicit other emotions in a wide range of people and vanity in herself. Her writing, therefore, like her coquetry, is initially the skill of *using* emotion.

This is the most important element of Harriot's perspective that separates her from other eighteenth-century heroines. Instead of denying or suppressing desire as the traditional eighteenth-century romance heroine does, and instead of swinging the opposite direction to embrace emotion, Harriot Stuart suggests the key to female agency is in being able to use sentiment. The use of sentiment allows her to exert some control over her own fate—to generate and conduct her own love affair, for instance, defined by passion rather than prudence or economics—and to increase her quantifiable power.

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[244] William Wordsworth, Preface to *Lyrical Ballads,* eds., R.L. Brett and A.R. Jones, 2nd ed. (London and New York, Routledge, 1991), 246.

Except in the case of Dumont, Harriot chooses vanity over passion, opting for that self-enlarging emotion that mimics the claims of status. Hers is an interest in increased status, but this is Harriot's perspective, not Lennox's.

For Lennox, the text documents the successes and failures of such a female in the world, enacting as it does so a rift between the heroine's perspective and the author's. Lennox places a female character with this radical view inside a generically standard romance plot in order to identify Harriot and her deviant perspective as the change in the text, but also as a potential change for the world. Harriot's story, then, becomes Lennox's thought experiment on the value of performing romance or emotion in the real world. Significantly, for instance, Harriot *begins* her story with this perspective—in a narrative shaped by a quest for identity and self-recognition. Unless the tale deviates from its pattern, the romance promises a shift in understanding, and *The Life of Harriot Stuart* delivers such a shift.

For instance, Harriot learns that performing romance can be restrictive as well. That is because as a genre, it is a recognizable construct available to others, and her performance of it licenses similar, responsive performances. We see this first in Mrs. Villars who, "being deeply read in romances, had her head filled with adventures of gallantry, tender confidances, and delicate friendships" (67-68). Harriot tells us the woman "conceived a very strange affection for me" (68). While this affection may seem strange to Harriot, it seems understandable to a reader who has already picked up on Harriot's performance of romance. Mrs. Villars knows the conventions of the genre and can see romance in Harriot. This licenses Mrs. Villars to participate in romance, and that is just what she does. She facilitates a relationship between Harriot and Dumont. She

shares Harriot's poetry with Dumont in order to fuel the fires of his passion, explains her backstory to him, arranges for Harriot to read with him. In so doing, Mrs. Villars, like Harriot, is playing a romance position—that of the friend. She facilitates their relationship because that is what friends do in romance and because that is her desire. But Mrs. Villars' performance necessarily affects Harriot's story. Luckily, this plot writing is the product of a "very tender friendship" with Harriot (68). The end result is pleasant to Harriot. In other instances, Harriot is not so lucky.

Harriot authorizes the performance of romance in the men she encounters too. Upon exercise of her feminine arts, she is abducted, drugged, compelled by brute force, threatened with violence, almost gang raped, and banished to a convent—all conventional romance plots. Belmein resorts to Indians for help in his abduction plot, since only they seem impervious to her charms. This adds the exotic and foreign to her story. Many of these adventures do provide space for surprising new possibilities for Harriot. She gets to travel to places she otherwise would not (France), and interact with foreigners she otherwise would not (the Spanish captain, the French nuns, Belmein's Native American helpers), and do things she otherwise would not do (beat back, with some assistance, an entire room of men by an impassioned speech). However, these are possibilities compelled by violence, and the potential they provide for unconventional behavior is paired with different restrictions, in most cases brute force. Harriot's opinion of these developments changes over the course of her tale. At first, she "admires" (121) the course her story takes, and then wonders at its strangeness. That changes to affliction. She reassesses her story as she goes as an excess of "vexatious adventures" (250), "dangerous . . . trials" (132), and "misfortunes" (63). Like Mrs. Villars', these men's performance of

romance affects Harriot's story; but unlike Mrs. Villars', the result is not pleasant to Harriot.

In fact, this is Harriot's first lesson: that she does not own romance. As a recognizable structure, the genre is capacious enough to house everyone's desires. She increasingly bemoans the part she plays in the passion she inspires in these men. When Mrs. Blandon, for instance, upbraids her for taking particular care with her looks while on board ship with strange men, she first ignores and later mourns her careless disregard for that counsel. The connection between this fatal decision and the attempted rape that follows is one striking reminder to Harriot of what her narrative implies over and over: that Harriot does have power, but not enough. The artifice Harriot uses to exert power over men simply calls forth their parallel "tender and ensnaring art" (110): Belmein's covert abduction in disguise, the Captain's drugs and sheer force, Repoli's position and reputation for violence, Count de R's intrigue. In this battle of the sexes between feminine and masculine desire, a man's desire, backed by his strength and resources, will always gain the upper hand.

What she learns next, then, is the degree to which a woman is unfit to right her own wrongs. Not only do the above violent intrigues demonstrate this; so do her attempts to release herself from them. Again and again, Harriot tries to take back her story and deliver herself from men's violent plans. Her wit, in fact, becomes a potent tool in deciphering artifice and intrigue and developing plans for her deliverance, and her wit does get her some things. She has the presence of mind to stab the captain with his hanger, which effectively delivers her from his rape attempt. When the lieutenant accuses Mr. Campbel of being accessary to murder, she "presse[s] between" (155) them and

delivers Campbel from recrimination. In many cases, however, the plans she meditates for deliverance come to naught. She plans to beg her father for redress during her wedding to Mr. Maynard, but winds up being abducted by Belmein instead. She plans to climb out the window when the men of the ship she was aboard make plans to gang rape her, but she is prevented by Mr. Campbel. She plans to bribe a garden worker to aid her escape from the Count de R—, but is saved by the arrival of the count's mistress who is dressed as a man, and her attempt to deliver Campbel and press herself into the service of the legal system results in near-gang rape. These deliverances show the impotence of a woman's wit in the presence of men.

Ultimately, however, Harriot's education in romance does not simply tutor her in gender politics; it provides an education in genre. Her performance of romance teaches her that genre—even one marked by such surprising possibilities as romance—is just another social construct like the one in place that she is trying to subvert. When Harriot calls her story a series of "misfortunes," she is hinting at another kind of power or control exerted in her narrative. She calls this force "fantastical" (121) and "extraordinary" (188) because it does not adhere to the laws of nature. It is the excesses of Harriot's tale that are unnatural, therefore fantastic. It may not be surprising that Harriot gets abducted by *an* impassioned lover. It is, however, fantastic that she gets abducted by or because of *five* lovers. The number of men she inspires with passion is fantastic, as is the fact—as she indicates herself—that she always has a lover (121). These excesses are what characterize her story as a romance: because her life exceeds natural laws, is capricious and whimsical. But this capriciousness, translated into romance, quickly becomes a textual law, and much like the Marquis de Sade's texts, the excess becomes the ruling principle

and the vehicle of tyranny and violence. Like Harriot, only to a greater extent, Sade's protagonist Justine is subject to the unexpected and surprising caprices of the men she encounters as she travels. However, while at first these encounters are read as surprising and unusual, as adventure adds to adventure in the novel, what was unconventional becomes convention because it has happened over and over. Caprice and whim are rewritten as regulatory. The true oppression Justine experiences, then, is not her individual encounters with male desire, but the fact that she is locked into a genre that codes those encounters as normal. Harriet's response to this excess moves quickly from admiration to despair. She laments this excess often, complaining that while she thought her troubles over, there were more in store.[245] Her comments recognize that ruling principle of excess as the guiding characteristic of her life, and place the responsibility for that on something other than the men abducting her.

In other words, the primary villain of Harriot's story is not a man, it is romance. Her affliction about her life story is that, not only can she not control men, she cannot control her story either because she is fighting against a supernatural force that insists her story be made up of adventures and misfortunes. The elements of romance in Harriot's story suggest that not only are all women powerless, they are so because of something bigger than just men. The vehicle of female oppression is that supernatural will or force best figured by excessive adventure in romance; it is vast and unseen, capricious and whimsical. This suggests that rather than controlling her fiction, the female character is controlled both by the genre and the society whose desires have created it. However, it also suggests, necessarily, that male characters are controlled by genres and society as

[245] "While I was thus wearing away my hours, in expectation of some favourable change in my affairs, fortune was preparing new miseries for me" (93). "I was plunged into new misfortunes" (230). "I am too much inured to misery, to be surprised at any new misfortune that can befall me" (262).

well. For the female in society, then, romance says that there is no definable source for the loss of power that characterizes her experience.

While this lesson in genre and agency plays out primarily in the arena of heterosexual desire, the entrance of Mr. Campbel suggests that Harriot is after more than love. The kind of power Harriot longs for is both social and political. This desire shows up in her interactions with Campbel, when her language adopts the rhetoric of politics and government. She tells him, for instance, "If you are determined to wear my chains, you must expect I shall be a most arbitrary monarch, and always take my own will for the reason of every thing I do" (161). Here she casts herself as a king and Campbel as her slave. This language, of course, is not that surprising in the context of amorous discourse. It is part of that dialogue in courtship that briefly places woman in a position of power in order to compensate her ideologically for the lack of power that will shape her role in the coming union, but it also accurately represents the position of the typical coquette.[246] As a person who privileges vanity over love, the coquette is searching for status, seeking an exalted position for which a monarch makes an appropriate metaphor. As Batchelor points out, coquetry is a Hobbesian model of power.[247] It dares to imagine the female as an absolute ruler.

However, Lennox employs Harriot as coquette to critique this particular model of self-empowerment. The coquette, she argues, makes a poor model for any form of political empowerment. In another example of political rhetoric, after receiving improper advances from Mr. Campbel's uncle the captain, Harriot tells him "were you a king, such is the pride of virtue, I should look upon myself as injured by offers of this nature: and

[246] This is what Braunschneider, *Our Coquettes,* 89 calls "the logic of gallantry in which men temporarily assume a subjected position in order to allay the discomforts of their true power over women."
[247] Batchelor, "The 'latent seeds of coquetry,'" 150.

shall I bear with patience such an insult from you, mean and contemptible as you are in my opinion?" (153). Here, she uses the role of king as a rhetorical figure to inform the captain of his position in her hierarchy of interest, but the rhetorical figure could also be seen as Harriot situating herself within a political structure. "Were you a king . . . I should" relocates the conversation as one taking place within a political relationship, a king and his subject. In so doing, she places herself imaginatively within the public sphere as a participant, but this imagined position as political participant is dismantled quickly when the captain tries to rape her. Afterward, when Harriot has defended herself by stabbing him with his own hanger, she is discovered first by Mr. Campbel, who urges her to leave. As the two are hurrying out, the ship's staff collects in the room, all looking on the wounded body of their captain. Mr. Campbel asks them not to enquire into the incident and to call for the surgeon. Instead, a lieutenant cries, "'Gentlemen, . . . I charge Mr. Campbel with being accessary to this murder: let him be seized, till he can prove his innocence'" (155). Ironically, it is Mr. Campbel who garners an accusation, not Harriot. Significantly, he is not accused of committing the murder or wound, but of being "accessary" to it. This suggests the lieutenant implicitly recognizes who committed the murder, maybe even the event that compelled it (rape); however, he does not address the murder itself, or the murderer herself. Harriot is essentially (legally?) invisible to him. The conversation about what she has done occurs around her from man to man. Harriot, however, insists on participating. She physically pushes herself into the conversation. She says "I pressed between Mr. Campbel and the furious lieutenant, . . . 'Forbear, cried I, . . . and do not condemn the innocent; I only am guilty of the captain's death, if he be dead . . . I am willing to appear before a court of justice, when we arrive at England, and to

remain your prisoner till then'" (155). While she is saving Campbel from false accusation, she is also insisting she be noticed, included. Perhaps more accurately, she is asking for the British justice system over that of the romance. Her plea is answered. The men notice her, but employ their own sense of justice that circumvents the British justice system: a romance plot (gang rape). Their response seems to suggest that her performance guarantees her only those possibilities found in romance. She is, after all, performing in a romance, not a legal system. The entire episode suggests Harriot's strategy for eliciting power is misguided.

Perhaps her mistaken drive for power is best figured by her name: Stuart. At the beginning of the tale, she tells us "my family is noble. [My father's] father . . . commanded a troop of horse in King Charles the IId's reign" (63). This genealogy reminds us of the other Stuart prevalent in British political consciousness at the time: the Great Pretender. If such a connection is intended, Harriot, by implication, is ousted from the public sphere, but sees herself as entitled to a system of rights and power and is determined to take them back from those who view such a claim as illegitimate. However, the name, in this sense, would also characterize Harriot to a British public as deluded or, at best, quixotic.

In another quixotic stab at political power, Harriot names herself as representative of all women and her coquetry as an attempt at achieving justice for them. When Mrs. Blandon asks her why she insists on playing the coquette, Harriot replies, "'But sure, madam, . . . you cannot blame me, if, filled with resentment for the injuries many of my sex have received from men, I embrace any opportunity that is offered me, to revenge their wrongs, and retaliate the pain they have given'" (147). Such a claim connotes a

sense of community built around female fellow feeling. Certainly, the histories she and other women (Mrs. Dormer, Louisa) tell in the novel help women connect over their received pains and wrongs. As liberal as her claim may seem, even this is a reflection of Harriot's own desire for power which, here, casts her as all women's leader or warrior. She perceives herself as having more power than other women, therefore capable of doing the avenging, but her inability to grasp power herself suggests this is a misguided notion.

However, while Harriot's political rhetoric dismantles the dream of political power figured by the coquette, the political rhetoric she uses helps to identify Mr. Campbel as its replacement. Mr. Campbel is different than any man she has met so far. Harriot's experience in romance makes her witness to male desire and violence. Mr. Campbel, though harboring desire for Harriot, does not participate in the violence with which she has seen desire paired. His difference from this male type is perhaps highlighted by his close relation to the captain who attempts the most violent take-over of Harriot's body. Instead, Mr. Campbel responds to her with what Mrs. Blandon and Harriot repeatedly refer to as "respectful passion" (159, 206). This respectful desire is a direct result of Mr. Campbel's obedience to Harriot's dictates. When Harriot asks him not to make any professions of love to her on board the ship where she meets him, he does not until they disembark. When she calls him "friend" instead of lover, he accepts it, admitting that his love for her is mixed with friendship. This is a degree of obedience Harriot does not expect. Early on in her acquaintance with Mr. Campbel, she accurately views this obedience as the potential to exercise her coquetry in greater degree. She calls Mr. Campbel "cut out for a lover. He seems to possess a thousand old-fashioned amiable

qualities, which would give a mistress such a charming advantage over him! How I could like to sport with the honest sincerity of his heart!" (146). In fact, the political metaphors are elicited by and around Campbel because he is the first man who allows Harriot to truly practice her tyranny. He does not take her heart like Dumont does, and he does not try to press her flirtations into marriage or an affair. He simply serves as a canvas on which she may act. This is part of what distinguishes Mr. Campbel from the other men she encounters. Campbel allows Harriot the role of "arbitrary monarch" (161). Repeatedly, she takes pleasure in exercising her coquettish advantage on him. However, while this gives her some pleasure, she finally admits "I found the passion Mr. Campbel had for me, was too ardent to allow me the ridiculous pleasure of trifling with his addresses" (167). His respectful passion ultimately conquers her coquetry—not her heart—because it erodes the necessity to rule over him. She recognizes the ridiculousness of the part she is playing in the face of his absolute sincerity. Perhaps her relinquishment of her role as coquette is also spurred because she recognizes in his obedience his perfect capacity to rule himself.

Therefore, Mr. Campbel serves as a replacement for the coquette's model of social empowerment because he is perfectly governed by Harriot. In addition, his "ardent passion," which would typically restrict a heroine's actions toward him, ironically increases Harriot's agency, both with him and in the world. This is because he takes responsibility for the information she gives him about her own desires, and in so doing removes the obligations typically associated with desire. When Mrs. Blandon dies and Mr. Campbel shows up to comfort Harriot, for instance, she recognizes both the necessity of mourning with someone who knew her governess as Campbel did, but also the

potential for him to read that action as the allowance of a more significant bond between them. She attempts to explain herself to him: “I shall always think myself obliged to you, sir, . . . One in such a distressful situation as I am, can never set a sufficient value on a friend, who—” (175). But he stops her here to accept her term for him: “Yes, . . . I glory in the title of your friend. My affection for you, tender and passionate as it is, takes in all the calmer qualities of friendship; and while I view your lovely person with the raptured eyes of a lover, as a friend your honour, your interest, and happiness, are dear to me as my own” (175). He is, significantly, recognizing her as a generic human (a friend) in addition to the necessarily female role of desired lover. While he is suggesting the two are combined in his heart, he is, by implication, separating the two out. His remarks suggest that he has the capacity to be just a friend, rather than insisting on that traditional, monochromatic role of lover. This response, however, is also a product of his prior understanding of the state of her heart and his standing in it. It is an implicit admission of his prior knowledge of what she has to offer him and an open acknowledgement of his feelings in spite of her lack of feelings. Harriot, then, is not responsible for Mr. Campbel’s feelings. He is. When Mr. Campbel makes his professions of love to Harriot, then, he is not obliging her to act. She isn’t required to return his feelings or halt interaction between her and Campbel. He is simply describing himself to her. As a result, she is free to use him in whatever respect she needs him rather than simply accepting or rejecting him in one role: lover.

She does find a new role for him, then, or rather Lennox does. Harriot admits early on she does not love him or hate him (122) and that does not change. Instead of casting him as a lover or a villain, or even a refused lover, he becomes her friend. He

facilitates her escape from the mob aboard ship, her return to England and, ultimately, her marriage as a result of the agency he provides her. In fact, other than Harriot herself, this is the other deviation from romance Lennox provides readers. Her book, particularly the end of her book, suggests there is room in the story of romance for another male. Ultimately, her story ends with her marriage. Even so, Lennox ends the book with two men, not one—both of whom Harriot has been engaged to. She marries Dumont in the last line of the text, but does so in a sentence devoted primarily to Mr. Campbel: "I had the pleasure to see [Mr. Campbel] assist at that sacred ceremony, which united me for ever to my beloved Dumont, with a serenity in his countenance, which persuaded me his heart was entirely at ease" (282). While she calls Dumont her "beloved," the bulk of the sentence, and the entire conclusion of the book, is dedicated to Mr. Campbel. I would argue that this is indicative of the roles the two men play in the book. Dumont, shrouded by mystery, tainted by intrigue, tinged with foreignness, and absent for most of the story, allows Harriot's story its conventional symmetry. He both represents and is her desire. Mr. Campbel, on the other hand, provides a different kind of symmetry.

Mr. Campbel serves as a foil—not for another character in the text—but for the genre of romance. This is not because he is not driven by desire. He is. It is, however, because he opposes romance's excessive misfortunes with his own excess: goodness. Mr. Campbel proves to be kinder, more loyal, more upright than Harriot expects a hero or lover to be. As he consistently exceeds her expectations, Harriot is increasingly surprised at his behavior: "Was it possible to listen to sentiments so tender and generous, without being extremely moved!" (268) she says. And again, "I was so deeply affected with the behaviour of this generous man, that I burst into a violent transport of tears" (280). These

are expressions of surprise parallel to those she delivers in response to the turns and twists of her story line. These exclamations ally Campbel with romance. While his goodness opposes the misfortunes of romance, the fact that both of these are improbable in their degree prove Campbel to be made of the same cloth as the genre Harriot enacts. He is the perfect, moral, upright, understanding romance hero, but, simply in being so, he implodes the genre of which he is a part. He says one cannot perform romance; one has to find it.

Campbel, as it turns out, is the foil of romance because he provides a suitable replacement for the aims with which Harriot employs it. While Harriot began her story with the intentions of employing romance to provide a space for resistance and increased agency, Mr. Campbel proves, instead, to provide those options for her. However, he does so by different means. He, for instance, comes to represent Harriot's reason. Near the end, Harriot tells us that she considers marrying Mr. Campbel after reflecting on his merit. She says that such a decision involved her "reason" (268). In other words, marrying Mr. Campbel was the logical choice. To choose him would mean employing a different faculty than that used to choose Dumont. She would have to give up her claims to the use of sentiment, a practice which he has long since eroded.

In spite of what the ending—with its marriage to Dumont—would suggest, she does not reject Mr. Campbel. She chooses him as the guardian of her choice. As a result of his excessive goodness, for instance, Harriot rewards Campbel with something she gives to no one else, including Dumont: her agency. "I left it to his choice to take me now" (269), she says, and she does. When Dumont reenters her life with his prior claim to her heart, she lets Mr. Campbel decide how her story will end. He it is who steps away

and allows her story to retain its integrity. In other words, the end of the story is his choice, not hers.

In fact, I would argue that Campbel is Harriot's dream man, not Dumont. While Dumont matches her in desire, Campbel provides the agency and empowerment she seeks all along. Campbel is Lennox's revision to Harriot's initial, quixotic belief in female empowerment. *The Life of Harriot Stuart, Written by Herself* remains a utopian text in the face of Harriot's misfortunes, then, by replacing a conventional romance narrative with a conventional romance figure. He, not her stories, is her vehicle to power. By replacing the genre with a character, Lennox leaves her protagonist with more potential for power. Because Campbel is not a structure, he cannot be co-opted and repurposed. He is an individual who does not share in the communal violence and unchecked desire that characterize the others. He does not write his own stories. As such, he is the ideal agent for Harriot.

However, Mr. Campbel is also a quixotic move—this time Lennox's. Lennox dares to dream such a man as Mr. Campbel could exist, but while the utopian tone of the novel is maintained through the presence of Campbel, it is worth noting that such a substitution of character for genre also provides a critique, not just of romance, but of all texts, including the one at hand. Any structure that can be co-opted and repurposed in the service of others can never be the tool for personal empowerment. I would argue that such a critique licenses its readers to do more with the story than Lennox does. It licenses us to note, for instance, that while Campbel, in his extreme goodness, provides an outlet for Harriot's wishes, he still represents the loss of her own agency. She still requires an agent, and, as her narrative points out so clearly, appropriate agents are few. They are

extraordinary. Perhaps they are even the product of the female imagination rather than real people. Which man in eighteenth-century England would defend a strange female against a crowd of angry sailors, or believe her apparent murder of his own uncle was justified, or step down as soon as someone he believes she loves more appears? Mr. Campbel is a brand of utopianism that dismantles itself. *The Life of Harriot Stuart* asks us not just to read and believe, but to simultaneously recognize the problems inherent within reading structures—that they are shared constructs that can be both liberating and restrictive. And romance, with its excessive idealism and self-consciousness, is the perfect tool to assist Lennox in conveying this idea.

Charlotte Lennox and Authorial Agency

Lennox uses Harriot Stuart's struggle for female agency to make a parallel argument about authorial agency. It is important to notice, for instance, that Harriot's strategy for resisting restrictions and eliciting agency includes writing. Specifically, as Harriot mentions, she uses her own emotions in her poetry not just to communicate or express herself, but to garner praise for herself and increase the scope of her power. Throughout her story, her writing does open doors for her. It serves as her introduction to Dumont, for instance, helps her make friends with the nuns in the convent where she is held prisoner, and gives her admittance to Lady Cecilia's society. However, her writing also garners her undesirable results that spiral out of control. She tells us, for instance, "I had reason, however, to repent the employing my pen so much on the subject of love: my style was rather too warm and passionate for one of my years; and the following poem was, perhaps, the first cause of one of the most cruel adventures of my life" (148). This

poem, "A Hymn to Venus," the captain reads before abducting and attempting to rape her. Here what happens to her writing demonstrates the problematic nature of the power given her as a writer. While she can exercise her will by writing, she cannot control the consequences of her choices. *Harriot Stuart* suggests that being a writer means living like a romance heroine: having enough power to publish, but no control over one's publications in the public imagination.

A lack of control over one's own products is a general condition of all authors. The above instance, however, suggests the loss of control Harriot experiences stems from her other role as female. The problem seems to be, as Harriot implies in the passage above, that her audience cannot distinguish between the writing and the person. Interestingly, she connects her writing to her person: "it was rather too warm . . . for one of my years" (148). The comparison suggests where she believes the problem lies: that the captain (and, presumably, others) cannot divorce her writing from herself. The combination of the two, then, is particularly eloquent.

This was just the quandary of the mid-eighteenth-century woman writer, who, as Janet Todd says, had to both be feminine and produce feminine texts in order to negotiate this double role. The female writer, she says,

> had to conform to the age's ideal of womanhood . . . she had to be virtuous and domestic. A woman writer was expected not simply to express her sex but also to call attention to her femininity, her delicacy and sensitivity. Review after review stated what women should write and how they did write, ringing the changes on the abstract terms denoting female authorship: elegance, delicacy, modesty, spontaneity and artlessness."[248]

As Todd indicates, a female author's books became an extension of her person, providing the public with more material with which to inspect her. If the book was not delicate,

[248] Janet Todd, *Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1660-1800* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 126.

neither was the woman, but a book also drew the female author out into the public for inspection so that the trajectory reversed itself. If the author was not delicate, neither was the book. In fact, according to Lennox's biographers, her books were in more danger of being damaged by their author's reputation, than the author by the books'.[249] In any case, a book and its author made an eloquent argument together, particularly for female authors as Harriot herself claims.

Fittingly, then, the question that seems to get asked most about Harriot's writing or any aspect of Harriot's life is whether we are looking at Harriot Stuart or Charlotte Lennox herself. Howard, in the introduction to the modern edition of *The Life of Harriot Stuart,* dismisses any claims to autobiography in Lennox's premiere novel.[250] Yet Bannet claims we cannot ignore the book's autobiographical elements.[251] The distinction between Harriot Stuart and Charlotte Lennox is, in fact, muddied by the documented similarities in their histories. Even in Lennox's day, *The Life of Harriot Stuart, Written by Herself* was primarily read autobiographically. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, for instance, read the character Lady Cecilia as Lady Isabella Finch, a friend of hers who had provided patronage for Lennox early in her writing career. "I was roused into great surprise and indignation by the monstrous abuse of one of the very few women I have a real value for," she wrote in a 1752 letter.[252] However, John Wilson Croker indicates that seeing Harriot's story as the author's was the standard reading of Lennox's first novel. In his edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson,* a footnote records "[Mrs. Lennox] next

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[249] Carlile, "Expanding the Feminine,"105-06, discusses several incidents in Lennox's life that suggest she had a bad temper, including a physical assault on September 22, 1778 that was settled in court. She also includes an anonymous letter that accuses Lennox of having hands "in . . . horrid order."
[250] Susan K. Howard, Introduction to *The Life of Harriot Stuart*, ed. Susan K. Howard (ND: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995), 28.
[251] Eve Tavor Bannet, "The Theater of Politeness," 73-92.
[252] Quoted in Carlile, "Expanding the Feminine," 116.

published, in 1751, the novel of Harriot Stuart, in which it is supposed she gave her own history."[253] As Howard has pointed out, Lennox "allowed people to assume that many aspects of her heroine's life were details from her own life."[254] To assist eighteenth-century readers in this assumption, Lennox used her own previously published poetry as Harriot's emotional evocations.

I would argue that Lennox does this intentionally. She employs autobiography and romance strategically, entangling them in order to confuse the boundaries between the two. The combination allows the romance to reflect back on herself, romanticizing her own life as a means of pleasing the public and increasing her sale-ability. In other words, she uses romance the same way Harriot does: to provide a space of possibility for herself. Biographical criticism always walks a fine line, but it is speculative at best in the case of Charlotte Lennox. This is precisely because of her skill at managing the details of her own life. For instance, later in life, she wrote a letter appealing to the Royal Literary Fund for financial support. There, she claimed to have been born in 1720 in New York, the daughter of the one-time governor of the colony. Other accounts of Lennox, however, suggest she most likely was not old enough to be born as early as 1720. Historical records secure the fact that her father was never governor of New York, and that she was not born in New York. By saying she was born in 1720, she could come across more pathetic and thus needy, and the claim that her father was governor raised her in status and appealed to their patriotism.[255] The tale she told the Royal Literary Fund, then, suggests she is practiced at fixing the details of her life to shape perceptions of herself.

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[253] James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. John Wilson Croker (London 1848), 83.
[254] Howard, "Identifying the Criminal," 137.
[255] A full discussion of this is provided by Carlile, "Expanding the Feminine," 108-09.

This is what Lennox does using romance in *The Life of Harriot Stuart*. Several historiographers have already agonized over the differences between Harriot and Lennox. They chart, for instance, the same trajectory in the two women's lives: from America, to Britain, to marriage. They note that Lennox, like Harriot, arrived in England at a young age only to discover her aunt and would-be protector was either dead or insane. They, like Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, suggest that Lennox's wealthy patronesses and early success as a writer are imitated in Harriot's story. The list could go on. I will make my argument using, primarily, Harriot's experiences upon her return to England. John Wilson Croker's footnote about Lennox, in addition to linking Harriot Stuart to Lennox's life, makes some biographical comments of its own. Of her time with Lady Rockingham, he says Lennox

> was received into her ladyship's home, where she remained till she fancied that a gentleman who visited at the house had become enamoured of her: though she is said to have been very plain in her person. This fancied passion led her into some extravagancies of vanity and jealousy, which terminated her residence with Lady Rockingham.[256]

Recognizing that this account of Lennox could be just as fictional as *Harriot Stuart*, a comparison of the two accounts is still productive. In Croker's account, Lennox has one love affair while under Lady Rockingham's roof. [257] However, his language assists him in ascribing the affair to Lennox alone: "this fancied passion," "extravagancies of vanity and jealousy," "she fancied," and "though she is said to have been very plain." By the time he's finished, he has reduced this to a figment of Lennox's imagination. In fact, most accounts suggest the affair at Lady Rockingham's really occurred and was with Alexander Lennox, the man who became her husband. Croker, however, diminishes the

[256] Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, 83.
[257] Lady Rockingham, who Lennox lived with for a time, was Lady Isabella Finch's sister.

affair to nothing by ascribing it to the same function for which an author of fiction is known. He also normalizes her marriage by separating it from the "fancied" affair. Croker's account shows the kind of fictionalized constructions of history to which authors' reputations were subject. However, in the note that directly follows this information, Croker unwittingly provides an antidote to his account's acerbity when he points to *Harriot Stuart* as autobiographical.

Lennox anticipates these potential incursions into her reputation by romanticizing her life. In *Harriot Stuart,* two men fall in love with Harriot under the countess's roof, not one: Mr. Repoli the tutor, and a young chaplain. This is, of course, while she harbors feelings for Dumont in her heart, and associates with Mr. Campbel. In other words, while Croker's math reduces Lennox's love affairs to none, Lennox has increased her lovers at this moment in her history by three. In another example, Lennox's life, according to biographers, quickly "dwindled into marriage" at this point in her history. [258] Harriot, however, leaves the countess, promises to marry Dumont, is kidnapped and imprisoned in a convent, then kidnapped by a man known for his amorous intrigues; she returns to England and reunites with her mother and sisters, then considers accepting Mr. Campbel, all before finally marrying. In both cases, Lennox simply adds numbers to her story line. She adds the excess that makes it romance. In much of the rest of the novel, the line between truth and fiction is not quite so clear, but this fuzziness assists Lennox in romanticizing herself. An inability to untangle the two forms of writing necessarily collapses Lennox with romance. This generic entanglement allows Lennox to deliver romance as a prepackaged, recognizable identity for herself. This romantic identity is a kind of shorthand because it is easily fleshed out by minds familiar with the conventions

[258] Berg, "Getting the Mother's Story Right," 373.

of romance. Additionally, this romantic identity will intercept, theoretically, other reports about her such as Croker's, because it is a desirable identity. Readers like romance. They want to believe it could coexist with real-life experience. By suggesting she shares a story line with a romance heroine, Lennox gratifies readers, extending the boundaries of the plausible. Simultaneously, she provides a fictional space in which she can write.

The scene where Harriot first writes poetry while performing romance with her pen serves as a useful model for Lennox's strategy in conflating autobiography with romance. Harriot takes to the pen, as any good romance heroine would do, to write "Sylvia" about her first adventure. When poetry comes out, however, it is Lennox's, published a year earlier. Lennox certainly was not the only writer to include her own poetry in works of fiction, but the similarities between Harriot and herself rework this scene as a fictional representation of her drafting process. Lennox is, literally, situating her written work within the plotline of a romance. In so doing, she is inviting her readers into her study, to a position of intimacy, but only imaginatively. The imaginative construct of romance contains readers' imaginations, preventing them from actually getting close to her. Carlile argues that this conflation of author and character indicates Lennox's interest in history.[259] I believe, however, that the use of autobiography indicates Lennox's interest in fiction. She contextualizes her work within a compelling, recognizable structure that allows her a small space of possibility: the possibility of selling novels, but also the possibility of anonymity.

[259] Carlile, "Expanding the Feminine,"103-37.

Coda: Mothering Mr. Campbel

Lennox's final novel, published thirty-nine years later, continues to grapple with the preoccupations of her first novel: agency and genre. Some critics have puzzled over the novel because of its abandonment, in Euphemia's narrative, of the traditional courtship plot. Yet there is plenty that is conventional about Euphemia's story. Though the novel begins with Euphemia's marriage, it shapes itself according to romance convention by placing her "at the threshold of initiation into experience, . . . which involves testing and self-discovery."[260] Her particular experience will be accessed, not by introduction to the belles esprit of London or the marriage market, but by travel to the New World. This is a "symbolic *rite de passage*" she accesses through marriage. These modifications to the familiar face of romance code Euphemia's story with a different purpose from that of the eighteenth-century domestic romance. Instead of finding a romance hero, I argue, Euphemia's story is invested in creating one.

At the outset, *Euphemia* seems to present a dark view on the potential for women to find a greater degree of agency in their world. Euphemia is that self-sacrificing, passionless heroine characterized by restraint and recognizable as the eighteenth century's most predominant form of heroism. She embodies the eighteenth-century ideal of femininity perfectly. As such, she denies herself almost every possible pleasure. She marries according to her mother's wishes but against her own. Once she does that, she is perfectly guided by her husband. She refuses the society of Maria and the familiar surroundings of Britain—things she longs for. That she is set up as that familiar model of perfect behavior is emphasized when Maria writes that she takes Euphemia as her model of conduct. As such, she leads Maria into similar self-denial. Maria, following

[260] Brown, "Fanny Burney's 'Feminism,'" 32.

Euphemia's example, refuses indulgence in romance and desire, insisting instead on defining marriage as a contract between men. As such, Euphemia is a female protagonist who undoes all of Harriot's utopian and quixotic unconventionalism. It is as if Lennox has traveled the same journey as her second female quixote and come out forever altered.

However, Lennox ultimately affirms hope in the face of such a dismal outlook. She does this by allowing romance to intrude on what is otherwise an epistolary novel, a literary form that emphasizes realism. *Euphemia* offers its utopian hope in the form of the main character's son. Instead of leaving female agency where *Harriot Stuart* left it—subject to the slim, improbable chance of finding an agent as good as Mr. Campbel—*Euphemia* suggests women must raise their own agent. In fact, Euphemia is the story of mothering Mr. Campbel. A mother, the novel says, can shape her sons with her own experiences and send them out with her trace to create a better world. In so doing, she increases the probability of romance and a better world.

This hope elicited via romance intrusion is best illustrated by the birthmark trope included in the novel. Euphemia's narrative carefully records her reactions to her multi-cultural, international experiences. One of those experiences is the event that compels the birthmark. A pregnant Euphemia and several of her female neighbors go on a picnic together into the wilds near their settlement in America. While reading Burney's *Cecilia* together, the company is startled by the intrusion of several Indians, who seem to want something from them. Unable to communicate with them and terrified of the prospect presented by the Indians, they send for a man in their community who can speak the language of the Native Americans. With his help, the situation is resolved without further incident, but later Euphemia gives birth to a son who bears a bow-and-arrow-shaped

mark on his chest. This mark is a symbolic representation of both Euphemia's experience (her encounter with foreigners) and her reaction to it (her fear). The tension between these two represents the limits of her imagination.

By marking him with these forces at odds with each other, Euphemia's son is able to resolve them for her. Several scholars have already written about the themes of colonization in both *Harriot Stuart* and *Euphemia*. Their arguments focus on Britain's interaction with the other and the different perspective women such as Euphemia facilitate because of their unique liminal position between us and others.[261] However, Euphemia still clearly struggles with different cultures when she encounters the Indian stragglers that compel the birthmark. The birthmark is her inability to understand the person on the other side of the "ingenious fancies" (256) of which Clara's reading reminds her.[262] The mark is a move towards the erasure of his father's image, replacing it in part with the image of the other. When he is kidnapped, he also becomes marked by the other in different ways. When he returns home, he has every appearance of the other. His own family members do not recognize him as one of them, only as an Indian. Euphemia's son has literally become her fear. At this point, she is no longer able to fear the other. She has, almost literally, mothered one. The son, of course, does not just bring home the appearance of the other, but also stories of the Native American tribes that raised him—stories of a mother who sounds too much like Euphemia for her to separate herself from them any more. Incidentally, not only does the son bring home stories of

[261] Susan Howard, "Seeing Colonial America and Writing Home About It: Charlotte Lennox's *Euphemia*, Epistolarity, and the Feminine Picturesque." *Studies in the Novel* 37, no. 3 (Fall 2005): 279 talks about the female picturesque, arguing Euphemia's unique position as both subject and object allows her to address the land and peoples she encounters with noncolonial fair play. Bannet, "The Theater of Politeness," 84 notes that the British encounter with the Dutch in the colonies provides an analogy for the clash of classes in England.

[262] All references to *Euphemia* are to the Broadview edition: Charlotte Lennox, *Euphemia,* ed. Susan Kubica Howard (Ontario, Canada: Broadview Press, 2008).

Native Americans, but also French Catholic monks. To all of these, Euphemia is indebted for their care of her son, but she is also connected to them through his person. His experience allows her to unravel ethnic boundaries, to reconfigure the world as a series of families, rather than marked by limits.

Significantly, however, in addition to helping her dismantle the national consciousness that constricted her imagination, Euphemia's son also helps her resolve the tension Euphemia manifests throughout the novel between her love of fiction and her sense of duty to reality. This is a perplexity she vocalizes just before seeing the Indians. She calls the class of writing Burney's *Cecilia* belongs to "agreeable fictions" and the product of "ingenious fancies," but she mentions in almost the same breath that such writing "has been called a tyrannical power, which the senses usurp over reason" (256). She does not resolve the tension between her reaction to fiction and others' assessment of it, and she does not privilege one interpretation over another. She simply lets the two hang together in the air. As a result, she gives birth to a son *and* a romance trope. The birthmark, written on her son's chest, identifies him as a participant in that genre. This is both literal and figurative. When her son is later abducted by Indians, the mark is what ensures his return. That is, in part, because it is the recognizable imprint of his mother's imagination, but it also assures his return simply because it is a romance trope. As a part of romance, the birthmark promises a return, symmetry, hope, a happy ending. When he does return, he physically unites her imagination with her reality. His return imports the surprising and improbable into the mundane and teaches her to integrate the experience of reading—its hope, its potential for the extraordinary—with the every day.

This is what *Euphemia* leaves us with, Lennox's final gift to the world: hope. Although the rest of Euphemia's story line dismantles the potential for the realization of other kinds of literary dreaming, in the end, such dreaming finds Euphemia. Her son, her Mr. Campbel, is her agent. He unites the unresolvable parts of her world because he is impressed by her uniquely female concerns. As a figure of romance, he will continue to improve the world for all those at odds with the status quo. Ironically, with his birthmark, he is Euphemia's text. Perhaps he is a metaphor for the utopian utility Lennox hopes her own novels possess.

APPENDIX

Mary Anstey to E. Montagu, 1750 ca. August, MO 105

The subject of my dear Mrs Montagus affectionate kind solicitude must take place of every other thought that fills my head & heart: it shall suspend all I have to say in my excuse for not writing sooner & what is still more difficult I will not say a word of the concern I feel for the imperfect Health of my own dear friend at Innbridge, till I have given her all the information in my power of her friend here; for whose affairs she expresses herself so obligingly, so warmly interested. Yet after all, I am afraid the account I am about to give will not be very satisfactory to your curiosity, to friendship, for the History you desire is not enrich'd with many circumstances of any great importance, even to the inconsiderable person, the little Hero of the Tale, but I think myself at least excused by your Letter, if I am not required by it to give a minute detail of every particular from the time I quitted you, & your post chaise, to deplore your absence in a solitary walk. –I found myself soon after I parted from you in the most strange uncouth place I ever saw, so did not know a step of the way I was to go, but my feet happily directed me to the back side of St Johns Gardens. My feel shall have the whole merit of it; for indeed my thinking faculty was at that time traviling in the Road to Hinchingbroke, & would have pursued the journey further if it had not suddenly been calld back by a voice not unknown nore unpleasing to me; I need not tell you from whom it proceeded: there are some certain trifles that would not agree with the Romantick turn of this Adventure; but as you know Sophia Western would in my situation have mett Tom Jones, or Clarrissa have been surprised by Mr Lovelace, you will easily guess the Knight errant of your friend.—He was accompany'd by a particular friend of his, who it seems had many years quitted those leers/seems/? Of Learned Contemplation & being come to visit him, they had agreed to take

a walk, & review those places where they had so often conversed together in their younger days: what was their discourse at this time, I cannot exactly tell; but by some hints given me I was led to conjecture the subject of it was not very remote from the person they happened to meet. I thought my self obliged as soon as I could to give some account how I came to be found in that strange place alone, &, accordingly gave the true one: upon which the Gentleman sd, "have you just parted from Mrs Montagu! I don't in the least wonder then Madam, that you appeard so melancholy, & disconsolate when we first saw you. Mrs Montagu is a charming Lady, & I know her friendship for you. I left Mr H--- this morning & one of the last things we talkd of was her friendship for you, we have just now been talking of it,- I wish I might tell you all." He stop'd here & they both laught. You may at first think this Behavior not very polite from a Person whom I had ever seen but once before in my life; but the great joy he discovered at first meeting of me, & the good natured Zeal he shew'd for the cause he thought his friend ingaged in, was a greater compliment than any other he could have pay'd me, & easily excused a little want of cerimony. G—sd he wished he had the Honour of being acquainted with Mrs Montagu, & as she was such a good friend, he heartily wished she was his friend. Upon the whole you must know that from this conversation I conjectured whether truly or not I cannot tell, that this gentleman was the very person who was present at the discourse you had with Jr H. wch you gave me an account of, for he seem'd to know the whole of it. His name is Low. He is one of the Canons of Windsor. I saw him once at Brinkley about a year ago; he was then introduced by Pr Y-- & I fanceyd then, from his manner of Behavior to me, that he was not entirely ignorant of his friends thoughts. The day after the walk wch I have just given you an account of, Sr G. (same person referred to throughout, her knight) came to Joumpingson; but who do you guess he found there? My evil genius had that very day brought Monsieur le Medesin; his visit indeed was not to me, nor I hope did not appear so, for he came with other friends of my Brothers; yet the encounter of these two, you will allow was not quite a propos; besides that a mixture of company was a bar to any conversation between ourselves as we all walkd out into the garden he had an opportunity of saying that he hoped he

should not always be so unfortunate as to find me ingaged with company, but he feard it would be some time before he should see me again, as he was upon the point of taking a necessary journey to London. I have heard nothing from him since; but I know his Business at London was to get Inshlution to & a dispensation to hold the Living of Barrow. I heard yesterday that this matter is complicated, & that he is gon to his Living to be inducted, so I imagine he might think proper to be in full possession of it, especially as it had been a controverted business, before he made any proposal to my Father. –so much for my History with which I fear I have quite tiered you; yet you tell me you would not have it break off here, like on of Marivaux novels, without being brought to the proper conclusion. I will give you an account of every Incident as it arises, but what may be the sequel I cannot yet tell: one has not the power of modeling a true History just as one pleases. For my own part my sentiments agree with yours in respect to the Happyness of being the companion & friend of a man of sence & virtue; that he is such I do not question, yet his regard & affection for me, on which all depends, is a matter still in need of confirmation. I would not have his future tenderness for me depend altogether on his virtues; & indeed I often think that at my time of life, & with such great personal disadvantages, I can scarce enter into the marry'd state with any better hopes than to meet with cold indifference & this I am sure would not make me happy. If I did not believe my self possess'd of his affection I could not entirely surrender my own, without which I am much afraid I should not produce any of those virtues which you tell me I have in Patto. Where my dear Friend shall I find this hidden treasure, these virtues in reserve, do they not swell in your imagination? If they have any real existence teach me to bring them into emediat use, & to fit them for present occasions; for you tell me I have virtues unemployed while alas! In my present state, I have not half so many as I want. – but why do I talk of any virtues but those of the Innbridge Waters, it is for their good quality. I am at this time more anxious than about my own, & they will be infinitly more beneficial to the world than all mine, if they restore the health of my dear Mrs Montagu.

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